

# STRATA SECURITY UPGRADES

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Most strata properties have good security against intruders. Access to lots are typically well protected and break-ins to individual lots are rare. Security in common areas, however remains a challenge for strata committees.

## What are the key steps to consider when reviewing your security and deciding if further measures are needed?

Firstly, make sure you are maximising the benefits of existing security measures:

- All common entry doors, lifts and gates can only be accessed via a restricted key, fob, or swipe. Audit access to keys, fobs, or swipes annually.
- Fire doors must always be kept closed and not propped open.
- Valuables such as bicycles, surfboards, tools, and electronics etc should not be stored in vehicles or open storage cages.
- Stress that owners should ensure important documents are emailed, where possible, or sent to a Post Office Box as apartment mailbox theft is common.

## Security measures you may have, or want to consider:

- **CCTV**  
Many recently built apartment buildings have CCTV cameras installed to cover main entry points and often inside lifts. The live feed and footage are generally installed in the building managers onsite office or in a secure service cupboard.
- **Video intercoms**  
Great for safely viewing those wishing to gain entry to your apartment or building. Owners should be reminded not to open doors to people they don't know.
- **Viewer door peep holes**  
Peepholes are still handy for individual owners and residents to see who is knocking before they open.
- **Digital locks, Bioscan etc**  
Technology has created a wealth of alternative security mechanisms that are being used in newer buildings and can be adapted to meet specific needs.
- **Onsite security**  
Larger buildings, particularly where there are also retail or office premises, sometimes engage security guards to patrol the building and monitor any CCTV feed to deter intruders and anti-social behaviour.
- **Parcel lockers**  
Dedicated parcel lockers linked to an app can be leased or purchased and installed onsite to give residents a better option than leaving parcels in foyers or entry ways.
- **Speed humps**  
A speed hump at the carpark entrance can be a simple deterrent to tailgating, as well as improve safety.

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## STEPS TO UPGRADE YOUR SECURITY

### Identity risks

If you believe the security measures in your building are inadequate, there are several actions to consider and steps to be taken to enhance safety.

For example, if you do not have CCTV, or believe your current coverage is inadequate, the strata committee first needs to be clear on what areas need to be monitored and where cameras should be located.

These might be the main entry points, basements, carparks, entry lobbies, hallways, stairwells, garbage rooms or any other blind spots. These should then be clearly marked on a copy of the strata plan.

### Obtain quotes

The strata committee should instruct the strata manager or building manager to seek proposals and quotations from reputable security companies through a tender process.

### Get owners approval

As the installation of new or additional CCTV is a modification of common property, the project needs to be approved by a General Meeting of the owners corporation (OC) with an accompanying by-law and meeting motion as a special resolution. This means that at least 75 per cent of total votes

cast must be in favour of the motion. The motion and by-law should include a detailed list of the cameras and their proposed location at the building, as well as the quotation/s supplied for owners to vote on.

The same process needs to be followed for security measures that involve a modification to common property, such as installing an intercom system, parcel lockers or speed humps.

### Fire safety impact

Upgrading locks to the latest technology or installing peep holes on existing doors do not need the same level of approval. Most apartment front entry doors are fire rated and any proposed peep hole or lock must be fire rated and certified that it will not compromise the door's fire rating integrity.

### Budget

As with any other upgrades or improvements to your building, the costs and benefits need to be carefully considered and the funds required should be raised in the levy budget approved by owners at the annual general meeting.

(Note – a strata plan that is part of a BMC or a community association will need to refer to their Strata Management Statement/by-laws.)

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **My building has 100 apartments, do 76 owners need to vote and approve the CCTV for the cameras to be installed?**

No, the voting is counted on the total number of votes cast, meaning if five financial owners and five proxies are the only votes cast at the General Meeting and all ten votes in favour of the CCTV motion the motion is approved. (Note: the above assumes a quorum has been being declared and the meeting formally opened prior to voting)

**What does it cost to prepare a formal CCTV by-law and motion?** A reputable NSW strata lawyer will usually provide the by-law and meeting motion for \$600-\$1000 depending on their rates and the complexity. If approved at the meeting, there will be an additional fee to register the bylaw on the Strata Plan Certificate of Title with Land Registry Services

### **Is CCTV in operation signage legally required?**

Yes, as Section 3 of Surveillance Devices Act 2007 and Part 2 Section 11 (b) of the Workplace Surveillance Act 2005 states;

(a) cameras used for the surveillance (or camera casings or other equipment that would generally indicate the presence of a camera) are clearly visible in the place where the surveillance is taking place, and

(b) signs notifying people that they may be under surveillance in that place are clearly visible at each entrance to that place.

### **How long Is CCTV footage kept?**

CCTV footage is retained for a period of 31 days, in accordance with Australian Standard 4806-2006: Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) – Management and Operation.

### **Who can access CCTV footage?**

Footage should only be accessible via the building manager, strata manager or security company. Enthusiastic owners or committee members do not have carte blanche to access CCTV footage.

Recording of private conversations is forbidden under the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 (NSW) and video recording is only permitted in public areas, avoiding any intrusion into private lots.

### **What are the rules on overcrowding?**

Occupancy limits are spelt out in the building's Development Application Consent by Council.

Section 137 of the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 also states:

(1) A by-law may limit the number of adults who may reside in a lot by reference to the number of bedrooms of the residence.

(2) The limit may not be fewer than 2 adults per bedroom.

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