

Managing Diversity in Strata Communities

Fundamentals for Strata Committee Members

Never Stand Still

Built Environment

City Futures Research Centre

If your strata scheme is culturally diverse, this checklist may help to encourage participation and harmony in your building. This list is based on suggestions made by strata managers and committee members across Sydney.

- (1) Get a sense of the diversity in your strata scheme. For example, consider doing a quick survey of residents' countries of origin, preferred language, proficiency in English, age group, and ownership status. Don't forget to include tenants as well as owners! You might also consider conducting an annual satisfaction survey to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. There are many free online survey tools available (e.g. [Google Forms](#), [Survey Monkey](#)). If you have e-mail addresses for residents you can e-mail them the link directly, otherwise leaving a flyer in all of the mail boxes is a quick way to access all residents. A sample survey is available [here](#).
- (2) Encourage owners of different cultural backgrounds, age groups and genders to join the Strata Committee. If you are on the committee, you could talk with owners prior to the AGM about whether they might be interested in nominating themselves. At the AGM, rather than asking for nominations and then saying 'the existing committee are happy to continue', ensure that a truly open call for new members is made.
- (3) Facilitate opportunities for participation, apart from joining the Strata Committee. For example, committee members can invite other owners and residents (including tenants) to propose sub-committees that focus on a particular issue (e.g. energy efficiency, lobby upgrades), or working bees (e.g. in the garden).
- (4) Ensure that the concerns or requests of all owners are acknowledged by the committee, brought to a meeting, tabled and the reasons for any decision or action minuted so that owners do not feel disenfranchised or discriminated against, even if their request was not approved.
- (5) While a professional translator might be needed in some cases (e.g. relating to disputes or legal issues), often an owner or resident in the building can help with translating and liaising with others from the same language group during meetings. This will not only save on costs but also convey a sense of trust amongst different groups of residents. Find out who might be able to help in this way (see tips #1 and #10, or ask around other residents) and speak with them prior to the meeting to let them know that you would welcome them playing this role in the meeting.

- (6) Consider translating important items of communication, such as the AGM agenda and information about important decisions. Use what you have learnt about the residents and owners in your scheme (see tips #1 and #10) to decide which languages. These could be done by a professional translator, but could also be done informally by residents living in your scheme. If the latter, it is a good idea to ask a second resident to check the translation. Alternatively you could add a brief note at the bottom of notices in multiple languages saying – ‘if you need this notice translated into your language, please contact ...’
- (7) Do not single out a single language for negative instructions or signage (‘do not do this’), as this can cause offence. Use clear, pictographic signs where possible so that the messages can be understood by different language groups. You can see some examples of garbage signage from the City of Sydney [here](#).
- (8) It is important that notices of breach of by-laws (e.g. washing visible from balconies, shoes left in corridors) are consistently applied to all residents, irrespective of their cultural background or whether they are renters or owners. It is also important that all residents know that by-laws are enforced on everyone. If people perceive that they are being targeted because of their ethnicity this can cause significant tensions within a scheme.
- (9) It’s often helpful to communicate issues in person with people who do not have strong English language skills. Letters, especially formal letters, can be easily misunderstood so it can help to follow these up with a personal visit.
- (10) Find ways to encourage residents to get to know each other. You might organise a social event or party or a working bee, or set up an online forum for residents to speak with each other. Consider using social media (e.g. a [Facebook group](#) or [WhatsApp group chat](#) for the building) to encourage greater interaction amongst residents and owners in your scheme.
- (11) Consider celebrating festivities of different cultures and religions. For example, if you put up decorations for Christmas, consider doing the same for [Chinese New Year](#), [Diwali](#) and [Eid](#). Many of these can be easily put together in a working bee day (see tips #1 and #10).

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