



## viewpoint



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### Need for Attorney General to Act Now.

We continue to receive calls from unit owners distressed by the behaviour of either their manager or fellow owners. Misappropriated funds, payment of accounts that are not the corporation's, bullying, breaches of law and more.

The Attorney General issued a discussion paper on the need for reforms of the Strata and Community Titles Acts. He sought submissions in October 2003. The Hon. John Rau, our firm and others in the body corporate community made submissions to the AG. (see [unitcare.com.au](http://unitcare.com.au) for our submission).

Some 18 months later we have heard nothing from the AG or his department. This is despite many phone calls and faxes.

The AG and his department appear crippled by the many problems besetting Mr. Atkinson.

This Government and the AG in particular have stated they are big on consumer protection. From what we have seen over recent years in the strata community, this need has never been greater.

Despite the AG's problems the needs of some 100,000 unit owners should come before his troubles.

Now is the time for the AG to bring the legislation to Parliament

Cheers

Gordon Russell CPM

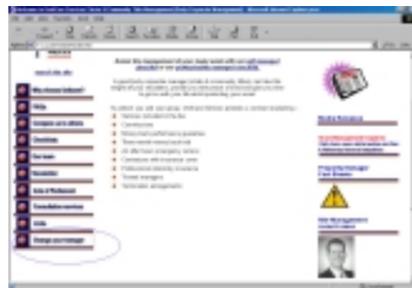
ps: Do you have any friends who need to read our newsletter? Give us a ring and we will post one out.

### CHANGING MANAGER QUIETLY

Changing a manager is often a sensitive and difficult matter for unit owners.

To help make it easier we provide a confidential section on our web site. This feature takes you through the steps and provides a meeting notice that can be used to call owners together if needed.

To get there log onto our web site and look for the 'Changing your manager' button on the bottom left hand side - see illustration on the right



Service	Number
Plumbing , Gas, Roof Leaks	8356 2750
Electrical	0411 195 275
Breakins, & Glazing	0437 818 449
Police to attend - noise/robbery etc	131 444
State Emergency Services	1300 300 177

# www.unitcare.com.au

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### New Services Proving Popular

Two new services we introduced last year have proved popular with our clients.

#### On Site Visits:

This new service has helped owners at annual meetings identify and prioritise maintenance works. It has also turned out to be an invaluable tool for their managers and contractors.

The service features:

- > An on site visit before your annual meeting
- > Photographs of your group including issues of concern
- > A set of photographs with observations & comments to all owners

If your group does not want an annual visit and photographs please advise your manager.

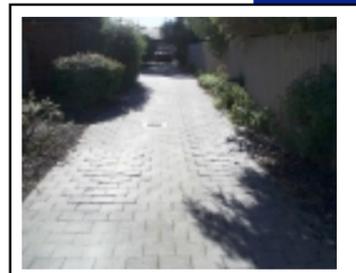
#### Group Assist:

Over the past year 10% of our clients have chosen to save money and have joined our new GroupAssist service.

With an eye to costs, GroupAssist management option is designed to help owners in smaller groups of six (6) and less. Owners pay 15% less as a group than the PrimeCare option, and continue to receive a full financial and secretarial service.

- > all minutes of all Corporation meetings
- > all accounting records in respect of receipts and expenditure
- > all statements of account in respect of each accounting period in which she was strata manager or which she has access to
- > any notices or orders served on the Corporation and
- > all information relevant to the Corporation's banking including bank statements

Our thanks to all of our clients who have embraced our new services and to those of you who continue to make suggestions on how we might improve our services to unit owners



Common driveway - badly rutted and loose. A risk to pedestrians. A quote to completely relay may be most appropriate point to start.

example of property photo & comment



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after hours emergencies - must phone 8364 0022 for up to date numbers

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## Services & Fees a comparison

We thought it might be useful for our readers to compare our services and fees with those of the other major body corporate managers in South Australia.

The fees in the table below include GST and are based on information gathered in July 2005, based on a group

of 8 units. Services and fees may vary according to the size of a group. Fees for additional duties by UnitCare are by negotiation. All care has been taken with this information and we advise that you confirm our competitors fees directly with them ☐

# compare services & fees



## Comparison of Body Corporate Managers Fees Comparison of Fees charged for strata titled group of 8 units

Fees include GST and are based on information gathered in July 2005, based on a group of 8 units. Services and fees may vary according to the size of a group. Fees for additional duties by UnitCare are by negotiation. All care has been taken with this information and we advise that you confirm our competitors fees directly with them. E & O E. 7/2005

Services (inc. GST)	UnitCare Services	Whittles	Strata Data	Adelaide Strata	Horner
<b>PROTECTION...</b>	Yes - 1 weeks management fees	not available	not available	not available	not available
Money Back Performance Guarantee	Yes	No	No	No	No
Three (3) month money back trial	Monthly ledger to Treasurer	Annually to owners	Annually to owners	Annually to owners.	to owners annually
Financial reports to monitor expenditure	Annually to owners	Quarterly on request	Annually to owners	Additional statements - fee \$20	No
Activity reports to monitor manager's service	Monthly to Treasurer. Annually to owners	No	No	If requested \$4/report	No
Trust Account Auditor's report to Treasurer	Yes - no fee for report	No	No	-	-
Committee / P.O. approve any extraordinary payments	Yes	-	-	-	-
<b>INFORMATION...</b>					
Unit Owners Kit (inc. Notes for Owners)	Yes	No	No	No	No
Newsletters	Unit Update Quarterly, hot topics & help for unit owners, posted and available on web	Occasional	Yes	-	No
Web site	Yes - 20+ pages of indexed help	Under development	Under development	Yes	No
<b>FEES...</b>					
<b>Option 1</b> PrimeCare - Fixed Management Fee per unit per year. Full service (minimum fee is 7 units)	\$3750/unit/quarter (\$150 /pa) includes maintenance, financial & secretarial services.	\$150/unit p.a.	\$154/unit p.a.	\$135/unit p.a.	\$137.50/unit
<b>Option 2</b> SelectCare - Time based fee option. (applies to Community Titles and additional duties)	\$130/hour Pay only for time used. Full report on activities and time taken. (applies to Community Titles)	-	exit fees apply \$44 + \$55	setup fees may apply not mentioned	setup fee \$55
<b>Option 3</b> GroupAssist - limited service low fee option for small groups. (applies to groups of <7)	\$31.87/unit/quarter 15% off PrimeCare fee. Financial service only. Ask for full details.	-	-	Misc: \$88 to lodge an insurance claim to a non ASM insurer.	-
<b>Meeting Fees</b>	\$120 for 1 <sup>st</sup> 1.5 hrs anytime	\$132 for 1 <sup>st</sup> 1.5 hrs evening at units	\$110 for 1 <sup>st</sup> 1.25 hours	\$88 before 6pm	\$77 for 1 <sup>st</sup> hour outside office hours
<b>Maintenance - comments</b>	No commissions or ownership of maintenance firm.	Change commission on many works	Own a maintenance firm - Strata Data Maintenance	\$176 for 1 <sup>st</sup> hour after 6pm	Mileage: charged at ATO rates
<b>Annual on site Visit, Report &amp; Photographs to owners</b>	Yes - fee of \$4/unit min \$32	no	no	Preferred contractor: \$55 to enter a non ASM preferred contractor	Own a maintenance firm - Murray Maintenance
<b>Fee for overdue account notices all fees billed to owner</b>	\$11 recovered from owner \$28 to send to debt recovery	\$11 recovered from owner \$33 to send to debt recovery	\$11 recovered from owner \$8.80 /unit	\$11 recovered from owner \$27.50 to send to debt recovery	\$22 recovered from owner \$22 to send to debt recovery
<b>Funds Investment fee - charge to manage funds</b>	No	Yes	no	no	In Part
<b>Photocopying &amp; Postage</b>	At cost	At cost - a/c \$20/unit	\$2.20 per unit per month	No reference on quote	Estimated at \$16.50 /unit average
<b>Annual Audit, Reconciliation &amp; Archiving Fee</b>	\$7.70/unit/annum	\$6.60/unit	\$8.80 /unit	\$7.70/unit min \$77.00	Public Officer Admin fee \$98
<b>Produce/Lodge Corporation's Tax Return</b>	\$95	\$110	\$93.50	\$38.50 + tax agent fee	\$55
<b>24 Hour emergency maintenance</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Convenient Payment of fees</b>	BPay, Credit Card, Cheque, Bank SA	BPay, Cheque, Bank, Electronic	BPay, Credit Card, Cheque, Bank, PO	BPay, Credit Card, Cheque, Bank	Cheque, Bank, Bpay

## Court Case - update

Since our last edition there have been some developments in regard to Ms. Lorraine Thomson (lawyer/accountant). You may recall that she refused to hand over the Strata Corporation funds and records following her sacking in May 2004. As the new managers we have been pursuing Ms. Thomson through the Magistrates Court. We published the orders in our Winter 2005 edition.

Following orders from Magistrate Kleinig to the ANZ Bank to transfer the group's funds to our Trust account, we discovered more than \$5,000 had been taken by Lorraine Thomson. Ms. Thomson had written a cheque to her business, L Thomson & Co, without authority and in contravention of the Magistrate's orders. She withdrew the groups funds just 5 days after she had been ordered by the Magistrate not to touch the funds without the authority of the Corporation and new manager. Ms. Thomson was in court when the orders were read.

This along with levies owed by Ms. Thomson have made it difficult for the strata corporation to pay its contractors and insurance. At the time of writing we understand that Ms. Thomson is before the Legal Practitioners Conduct Board on ten complaints. In addition she has been reported to the Police for misappropriation of funds. She is due to appear in the Magistrates Court in late August on the matter of contempt and the unpaid levies.

We have put in an extraordinary effort to safeguard our client's records and funds with mixed results. The good news is that the group is insured with CHU/QBE. We have made a claim for the missing funds against the Fidelity cover and are hopeful of recovering the money.

This case and many others involving body corporates make the case for a cost effective specialist tribunal. We understand legislation to reform many body corporate matters will soon reach State Parliament - see editorial on Page 4 ☐

## Love More & Live Longer

WATCHING a sunset with your lover, holding a sleeping baby, playing with your beloved pet dog - they're all timeless moments.

An Australian researcher believes love in all its forms may actually be able to slow the biological clock.

So whether it's between partners or even an artist's love of painting

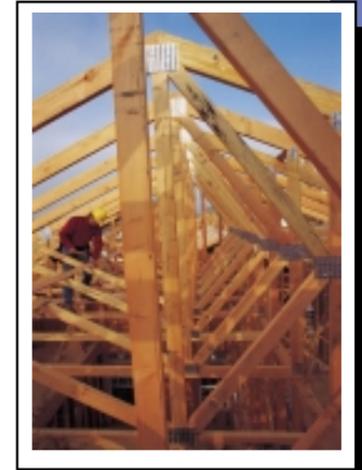
- the more love you have in your life, the longer you're likely to live.

"Having love in your life will improve your chances of living a long life" said Mark Cohen, founding professor of complementary medicine at Melbourne's RMIT University. "When you have love in your life it influences the laws of nature to reduce the experience

## Building Cost Increases

The following appeared in Common Ground (published by CHU Insurance) this year.

The average cost to build a house has risen by up to 7% or \$9,000 in the past year or even more in some states, according to a leading industry group. It is predicted that building or renovating a house will soar as much as 10% in the year ahead.



The Master Builders Association said the increase had been driven by spiralling material costs, shortages of land and a lack of skilled tradespeople - costs had increased by about 20% - 30% in the past year and are expected to keep spiralling upwards.

This rise was also being attributed to a heavy construction schedule.

There are critical shortages in several skilled areas including finishing trades such as tilers, wall and ceiling fixers and bricklayers. Labour costs have jumped as much as 30% in WA because of skills shortage tradesmen - as an example plasterers can make up to \$800 a day.

Industry members said yesterday that even some units sold at the start of the year before they were built or off-the-plan' have been hit by the cost increases, with at least one redeveloper forced recently to renegotiate prices for apartments it sold nine months ago ☐

of time. So if you're doing an activity that you love to do, whether it's making paper aeroplanes or gardening or looking into the eyes of your lover, you get moments when time seems to stop, or it seems like five minutes but it's really been an hour."

Professor Cohen told the International Conference on Healthy Ageing and Longevity in Brisbane love also accounted for the fact women generally lived longer than men.

"Women are the major carers on the planet and from that perspective, it makes sense that women would live longer because they have more love in their life," he said ☐

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