



## GIFT GIVING WITH HEART

The following article is by Ruth Ostrow writing in the Australian. We believe it is worthy of consideration given the time of year....

A friend has just had an altercation with another friend over a gift. Karen spent time getting a special Christmas cake hand-made for her friend Sally, who is a health freak. The cake was gluten-free, sugar-free, and made with fresh fruit.

Karen gave Sally the cake, but Sally simply said: "I don't eat cake. Please take the cake back." The argument that ensued became the proverbial dilemma of this time of year.

How do you tell someone that you don't like the gift they've given you without offending them? But how do you stop people continuing to give you things you don't want if you don't tell them the truth?

And who wants to be left with a whole pile of the unusable: fake Rolex watches, another toaster, a Mickey Mouse nightgown, or bad music?

"I was horrified!" Karen said. "She should have just kept the cake and given it away to someone else. The real gift was in the time and love I put into choosing the cake. Sally took away the pleasure of giving by reacting so rudely."

"I was shocked!" Sally said. "How many years has Karen known me, and still she doesn't get that I'm very fussy with what I eat. I never eat cake. I never eat sweets. I found it very offensive that she doesn't know me by now. Plus, if I hadn't said something, I'd end up with another cake next year!"

Whoever is in the right, the truth is we do get offended when we're given inappropriate gifts because we want people who love us to know us - to know, for instance, that we don't listen to John Denver's Greatest Hits. Gifts are a validation of our identity.

One friend of mine ended up leaving her partner after he gave her a garish diamond bracelet for Christmas. He was trying to make up for neglecting her. But the bracelet compounded the offence, given she is a naturalist who hates jewellery and excessive spending.

"It made me sad. I felt so depressed because he meant well, but it proved that he just didn't get me at all!" she said.

If there's a Christmas lesson here, it's this: really think about the person you are giving a gift to. Laziness or a lack of creativity does offend. When engaged in the gentle art of gift-giving, it is always better to spend less money but more time getting it right ☐

[www.ruthostrow.com](http://www.ruthostrow.com)

## CHRISTMAS ARRANGEMENTS

Our best wishes for the New Year, to you and those close to you.

This Christmas we are closing our office from 5pm Friday December 18th and opening on Tuesday January 5th from 9am.

If you have an emergency over the break and you need assistance just ring **8333-5200** for up to date details on contractors and emergency services, or see the adjacent list.



## VALUE OF TRAINING

For some 18 years I have been designing and running training sessions for the Real Estate Institute of SA. Our sessions target sales agents and property managers as well as strata managers.

I am still surprised at how many myths, misunderstandings and lies continue to be told.

In our most recent strata management course we had property managers, sales agents and strata managers. They reported that:

they had unknowingly failed to provide their body corporates with accurate, legal and helpful advice.

they had misunderstood the law.

body corporate managers had misled them over their clients rights, causing them to pay for services rather than the strata.

Professional training is fundamental for an industry to thrive and receive the respect of its community. In Australia it is an article of faith that training is worthwhile and essential for a successful life, industry and economy.

I am pleased to see that C.O.A.G (Council of Australian Governments) is moving for a national approach to the licensing and training of strata managers - see page 3. This approach will hopefully see our state government sign up and finally provide South Australia's 100,000 plus unit owners with managers who know what they are doing.

Cheers

Gordon Russell CPM

ps: Do you have any friends who need to read our newsletter? Ring and we will post one out or they can download it from our website ☐

## UNITCARE WINS STATE AWARD - AGAIN

UnitCare Services has for the second year received the REISA Award for Excellence in Strata Management.

The awards held in October recognise excellence across all facets of real estate in South Australia. This is the 2nd year that the Real Estate Institute has included Strata Managers.

The Independent Auditor stated...

**The nominee (UnitCare Services) has undergone the rigorous audit process and had their nomination and achievements verified and confirmed.**

**As the entry was of an exceptionally high standard, the Independent Audit Consultant has confirmed the nominee as the winner.**



"Thanks to our clients, our great staff and to the many sales agents & property managers who refer us new business", said Gordon Russell, Managing Director in his acceptance speech on the night."

"This year we launched our Best Practice Manual. A great new service that is free and online. We recommend it to property managers and sales agents & strata managers as a great resource."

Our new Best Practice Manual for unit owners and managers helped us earn the Award.

We are looking forward to our fellow body corporate management colleagues rising to the challenge of providing excellent service and joining us at the 2010 awards ☐



## COMMUNITY TITLES BEST PRACTICE

Our new Best Practice Guide for Community Title lot unit owners is now available online at [www.unitcare.com.au](http://www.unitcare.com.au) It assists lot owners, officers, managers, agents and property managers with:

- understanding the range of laws which impact on community titled groups;
- boundaries - the Lot - who owns what;
- maintenance including building terms and who is responsible;
- calling and managing meetings;
- budgeting;
- insurance including claims, valuations and types of cover;
- dispute resolution and more.

Both strata and community titles are now covered on our website.

We hope you find our site helpful ☐



Christmas arrangements - see back page

## emergency numbers

Plumbing , Gas, Roof Leaks	8356 2750
Electrical	8244 0733
Breakins & Glazing	0437 818 449
Police to attend - noise/robbery etc.	131 444
State Emergency Service storm/flood	132 500

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after hours emergencies - must phone 8333 5200 for up to date information.

## POOLS & INSURANCE

Insurance companies are cracking down on body corporates who own a pool or spa. The following are the special requirements stipulated by CHU/QBE Insurance.

Sign on gate of door leading to the pool which states:

- Children must be accompanied by adults
- No diving.
- No running in pool area.
- Depth at shallow end is x meters.
- Depth at deep end is x meters.
- Glass or other breakables not to be used in pool area.
- Pool surrounds may be slippery when wet.
- Swimming after the consumption of alcohol is dangerous.



Within the pool area:

- Install clear warning signs showing the dangers of diving in shallow water. A pictorial sign and a written sign placed at the shallow end of the pool is advisable.
- Show the depth of water on the sides of the pool at varying depths.
- Surround the pool with a non-slip surface.
- Install warning signs indicating surrounds may be slippery when wet.
- Implement rules such as 'no diving', 'no running in pool area', 'children must be accompanied by adults'. These rules must be adequately policed by the body corporate.
- Ensure lifesaving information is clearly displayed.
- Ensure that lighting is adequate both in and surrounding the pool area.

General:

1. Inspect the pool and surrounding areas regularly for potential dangers (e.g. sharp or protruding edges/tiles) and any objects prohibited from pool area (e.g. chemicals, glass)
2. Ensure all residents are aware of the rules relating to this area of common property.
3. Regularly check that all warning signs are in place and are not obstructed from view.
4. Ensure that all facilities are properly maintained.

Failure to abide by your insurance company's requirements may void your group's cover and risk all owners facing a claim on their assets to cover any claims ☐

## ETHICS - COMMISSIONS TO DEVELOPERS

The following is an article from the Owners Corporation of Victoria. Their newsletter is well worth a look at [www.ocv.org.au](http://www.ocv.org.au).

OCV has come across a letter from a developer seeking to appoint an owners corporation manager for a new development. The basis for appointment is on bidding on the commission to be paid to the developer, and advises the cost of owners corporation management fees is not important.

OCV considers it unethical for a strata manager to purchase or offer any form of inducement to a developer to procure the owners corporation management rights to a property. That is, it is unethical to offer any form of financial reward or discount or preferential treatment to a developer in order to get the business.

As well as a breach of the OCV Code of Conduct, a strata manager paying commissions to developers, and using the OCV Contract of Appointment, would also be in breach of that.

OCV has previously warned our members that if any strata managers are currently doing this, the practice is to cease immediately.

OCV has written strongly to the developer and advised that if we become aware of any further instances of this practice, we will pursue further action including progressing through regulatory bodies.

**Note:** In South Australia we are aware that some developers of large groups are signing up managers for 10 to 15 years for a consideration. This has resulted in outrage and legal action by some of the owners ☐

## RELAXED WATER



New flexible watering times apply from midnight Monday 16 November 2009

For the first time since 2005 heavy rainfall in the Adelaide Hills in spring has meant our storages are in a healthy state leading into summer. Adelaide's water consumption has also been tracking below our target forecast under restrictions. These more flexible times allow you to spread your watering times in a way that suits you and helps your garden survive the coming summer.

Dripper systems and hand-held hoses fitted with a trigger nozzle can be used for a maximum of 5 hours a week between the hours of 6-9am or 6-9pm on any day.

Watering cans and buckets can be used on any day/time. Sprinklers and other watering systems remain banned.

Currently watering times remain unchanged for people with a permit who are unable to adhere to restrictions due to age or disability.

If you're having difficulty adhering to water restrictions due to age or disability download a permit application at [www.sawater.com.au](http://www.sawater.com.au) ☐



## IS YOUR BALCONY SAFE ?

Do you ever have your balcony or verandah inspected professionally? Regular safety checks might be worth thinking about in the wake of three recent balcony collapses.

The balcony of a Perth home hosting a Halloween party collapsed last month, following on from collapses in Morayfield and Ascot.

Solutions IE managing director James Freestun says all multi-storey buildings should have regular safety inspections, with records kept up to date.

"Ensuring safety inspections are carried out annually on your buildings is imperative to the safety and wellbeing of residents or anyone using the balcony," Freestun says.

"Many local councils recommend this be done, one example being the Gold Coast City Council."

Freestun says the Gold Coast Grand Prix (formerly Indy) highlighted the need for regular checks because it saw balconies being used to their maximum capacity.

He says a fatal collapse in Ascot in November 2008 might have been avoided if a safety check had been properly conducted, as an investigation into the collapse found corrosion of nails, rotting timber and dirt between beams and joints.

Solutions IE says it's increasingly finding issues relating to concrete cancer and rusting steel supports and fixings on building balconies.

"High-rise buildings are now starting to age and the maintenance issues relating to safety issues like balconies are becoming more and more of a risk to those who live, work and visit them," Freestun says.

"Buildings with the highest risk have timber supports or balustrades, non-galvanised fixings, are within one kilometre of salt water or are older buildings with concrete balconies. It has got to a point where one in five buildings that have their balustrade load tested fail. This is an alarming result and indicative of the growing issue."

Our thanks to the Owners Corporation of Victoria [www.ocv.org.au](http://www.ocv.org.au) for this article. Our online Best Practice Manual [www.unitcare.com.au](http://www.unitcare.com.au) covers balcony problems and prevention ☐



## NATIONAL LICENSING OF MANAGERS

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed to develop a national licensing system that will remove inconsistencies across state and territory borders and allow for a more mobile workforce.

Under current arrangements, an array of occupational trades is licensed to varying requirements in each state and territory.

The COAG agreement on 3 July 2008 will result in a new national system that will be endorsed in an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) between jurisdictions by COAG in December 2008. The system will see a national approach to the licensing of a range of economically important trades.

COAG has agreed that the national system will initially apply to the following trades:

- \* air-conditioning and refrigeration mechanics occupations
- \* building occupations
- \* electrical occupations
- \* land transport occupations
- \* maritime occupations
- \* plumbing occupations
- \* **property agent occupations.**

COAG has requested that the Business Regulation and Competition Working Group, in consultation with the COAG Skills Recognition Steering Committee, report back to COAG on progress towards:

- \* a set of national licensing reform principles for determining whether regulation of trades is warranted
- \* a review to determine the necessity to continue licensing trades that are licensed in only one or two jurisdictions or trades not included in the Steering Committee's Ministerial Declaration process under the Mutual Recognition Act 1992
- \* arrangements to sustain and further improve the gains to mutual recognition that have been made through the Ministerial Declaration process for those trades that are not part of any new national licensing arrangements

Pursuing a national legislative system for selected trades, including:

- \* cooperative national legislation
- \* national governance arrangements to handle standard setting and policy issues and to ensure consistent administration and compliance practices
- \* all current holders of state and territory licences being deemed across to the new licence system at its commencement
- \* the establishment of a publicly available national register of licensees
- \* the Commonwealth having no legislative role in the establishment of the new system. [www.licensinglinenews.com](http://www.licensinglinenews.com)

What does this mean for South Australian unit owners? Currently strata managers are unlicensed and unregulated. The COAG initiative will put pressure on our state government to fall into line with a national standard for property agents (includes sales, rental & strata managers.) COAG is meeting over coming months on this matter ☐