
QLD BUSINESS

Body corporate watchdog take on private mediator role

The head of the State Government's body corporate watchdog has resigned to take up a new role in the private sector – but his new gig won't be too far from what he's been doing for the past five-and-a-half years.

Darren Cartwright, The Courier-Mail

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The head of Queensland's body corporate watchdog has jumped ship and will now engage in private dispute resolution and he's warned downsizers to be wary of the obligations of strata title living.

Body Corporate and Community Management (BCCM) commissioner Chris Irons is officially still on leave although he will not return to his role of five-and-a-half years.

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He starts on Monday with strata law firm, Hynes Legal where his role will be to resolve disputes before they reach his former department.



Chris Irons in South Brisbane. Picture: AAP/John Gass

Mr Irons said there's a "give and take aspect" of living in strata units and it may be a new experience for downsizers who made undisputed decisions when living in their own house.

"Downsizing is about understanding the differences, and where once upon a time they made decisions without much thought, but once you own an apartment you still have to abide by the bylaws," Mr Irons said.

"When making modifications or renovations, a lot of the time there's nothing much to do with body corporates, but there are also occasions when renovations to an apartment may impinge or have implications for use of common property."

He said noise emanating from within a unit because of renovations may be an issue as may many aspects around engaging contractors and tradies that would not have been a consideration in a privately owned house.

BY THE NUMBERS

Registered Body Corporates

Queensland

+14%

Brisbane

+15.3%

2018-19 FINANCIAL YEAR

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In the last financial year, the state government run BCCM handled 17,751 inquires or about 70 per business day.

Topping the list of disputes was animals, ahead of maintenance and owner improvements while parking complaints came in fifth.

Communicating with neighbours and the body corporates was always beneficial and could help mitigate complaints.

“You don’t need body corporate approval for improvements inside your apartment but the noise from tradies, jackhammers or other tools going from 7am to 7pm has an impact on others,” he said.

“If you’re living in a house you can go ahead and do that but within a complex you have to think about parking, the use of the lift, noise, debris and those kinds of things.”

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Even owning pets within a strata title unit may be permitted however, permission may first have to be sought from the building’s body corporate,” he said

“People moving into an apartment who want to bring their dogs with them, have to stop and not assume it is going to happen immediately,” he said.

Mr Irons not only speaks from his experience as the head of the BCCM but also as a tenant himself which he believes places him in an ideal position to provide advice on solutions on strata disputes.

“I am a tenant in a block and I had to apply to have a dog and like everybody else, even though I was the commissioner, I had to put in my application,” he said.

“You can’t make assumptions and there is a process to follow.”

Even though many tenants are free to make renovations within their unit, it’s best to seek specialist advice on the type of changes they are intending to make.

He said one common complaint relating to noise was not during renovations, but afterwards, because of a poor choice of materials.

“Most of the noise complaints I used to deal with were more so about what the owners of the apartments had done in renovations, for example, taking out the flooring and putting in hardwood flooring and not realising that affects the sound transference to the apartment below,” he said.

Mr Irons said, although he was not a lawyer, his extensive knowledge of alternative dispute resolution and the practical application of strata legislation would complement the law firm.



📷 Renovations are usually no problem but foreseeable issues with noise, debris and even lift access may need to be discussed with the body corporate beforehand, according to outgoing BCCM commissioner Chris Irons. Picture: File
