



Australia-wide, apartment living is now part of everyday life. Currently, more than 12 million people are sharing common areas including lifts, pools, gym facilities, BBQ areas, gardens and car parks. This also represents a variety of challenges and changes for resident's lifestyles. In this new 'The Avenue Owners and Residents Newsletter' we hope to keep you updated and informed to make your living at this precinct more enjoyable.

WHAT YOUR COMMITTEE AND MANAGERS DO

Most people in high-rise developments aren't fully aware of what's involved in the daily running of their building. The majority of work is done 'behind-the-scenes' with many people oblivious to the amount undertaken by the Caretaker, Body Corporate Manager (both paid roles) and the elected Owners Corporation Executive Committee (voluntary) consisting of owners who are elected at the Annual General Meeting.

Executive Committee

Because The Avenue is a commercial and residential precinct, there are three executive committees, one for Residential, Commercial and an overarching Principal for common areas that each use jointly. The Chairperson of the Residential and Commercial Committees make up the Principal Committee.

At The Avenue your committees work closely with the Caretaker (Remmah Properties) and the Body Corporate Managers (Whittles) to manage and administer the maintenance and development of all common property, infrastructure and shared facilities, day-to-day administration of the corporation, budget preparations and ensure that the wishes of unit owners are represented. The committees meet regularly, usually a minimum of four times a year between AGMs. At the recent Residential Annual General Meeting (AGM) the following people were elected to form The Avenue's Executive Residential Committee: Mr J S Perkins – Chairperson, Mr F J Thomas – Secretary, Mr P Leutenegger, Mr P Gordon, Mr G P Hamon, Mr D R Ryan, Mr M Hodgkinson. These members are all astute, experienced local business owners who are passionate about the quality of the building and resident's living facilities.

The Body Corporate Managing Agent

Our building's Body Corporate Manager is Whittles. They work with the Caretaker and operate as the Secretariat and Treasurer for all three Executive Committees.

Whittles work directly for unit owners, not tenants. A tenant's first point of contact for any issues within your apartment is your letting agent, not Whittles or the Caretaker.

Whittles convene all meetings including the AGM, prepare and dispatch meeting minutes, facilitate correspondence with owners, arrange the necessary insurances and audits. After advising on short and long-term maintenance and committee budgets are set, they raise and collect all levies, issue contribution accounts, action debt recovery, provide annual income and expenditure statements and maintain all financial records. For a complex this size, their financial management is invaluable.

The Caretaker

Unlike the majority of strata buildings in Darwin, The Avenue has a caretaker, Remmah Properties.

Remmah holds all the building plans and documentation, the evacuation manual and security incident logs.

While they undertake the majority of work a normal body corporate manager would have contractors undertake to ensure all equipment and facilities are correctly maintained and fully operational, like lifts, lighting, air-conditioning and cleaning in common areas, gardens, pool, gym etc, they also do much more.

From managing the mail and parcel deliveries, maintaining access control systems, devices and key systems to the building's common area, pest control, garbage and more.

Issues and Contact with the Caretaker

Any resident (owner or tenant) of The Avenue complex who see an issue or problem should contact the Caretaker in the first instance. This can best be done via phone on 0447 416 672 (Helpdesk, business hours) or 0422 251 479 (after-hours emergency) or email caretaker@remmah.com.au

Most information can be found on the building management system, **Buildinglink**

www.spiritontheavenue.com and the new closed Facebook group **The Avenue Community Info**, strictly to

report building issues and see Caretaker updates. Request to join via this link - www.facebook.com/groups/TheAvenueCommunityInfo

This new Group page will provide you with:

- A convenient area to report things that you've noted around the premises or to check whether it has already been reported/actioned.
- A platform where you can ask the Caretaker, or other residents, for advice or info. The Caretakers have an abundance of knowledge and are happy to share.
- Updates on day-to-day issues
- ETAs for maintenance works
- Precinct info, events and offers
- Weather updates during Wet Season
- Introduction of residents and businesses
- Discussions about potential improvements
- Occasional surveys.

Through **Buildinglink** owners and tenants can also book a BBQ area, the Games and Function Rooms. Using the main foyer for moving in or out, or large items is strictly prohibited. The Avenue has a special-purpose loading area for this at the rear of the building. To ensure you don't break a lift by holding the doors open too long, contact the Caretaker for a lift key.

WHAT OWNER'S QUARTERLY LEVIES COVER

All owners pay quarterly levies. They cover the cost of the daily operations and maintenance of the complex, including lifts, pools, gym, gardens and recreational areas, insurance, utilities for common areas (lighting, air-conditioning), cleaning, garbage removal, repair and maintenance, legal expenses and other day-to-day operating costs. Unit owner levies are determined by unit entitlement value issued at initial building registration (the unit size and floor level in the building). After the annual budget is set by the Executive Committees and accepted at the AGM this dictates what percentage each owner's levies will be each quarter for the coming year.

At The Avenue's recent Residential AGM a 10% increase in levies was agreed — the first increase in four years. Owners will only see an increase of 5% this financial year and 10% for the 21/22 financial year. The increase was necessary due to rising non-negotiable operating costs and depleting residential sinking funds.

REPAIRS, MAINTENANCE, RENOVATIONS

Repairs in strata buildings are complex. Owners are responsible for all repairs and maintenance in their own apartment. While you need to organise the repairs and tradespeople yourself, The Avenue Caretaker can assist your trades as this building has some unique aspects eg the air-conditioning system. Plus, the Caretaker has all the As-built building and apartment plans, so it's wise to have your tradesperson check with the Caretakers before they begin any work, as you are responsible if your traders damage any building utilities or structures. And secondly, they have a list of tradespeople who are experienced and familiar with the building's anomalies. But ultimately the decision rests with the owners or property agent.

The Caretaker **MUST** be advised of any major works or renovations at least 14 days prior to them being undertaken. They will ensure the work meets building standards and also issue notices to other residents of any noise or workplace disruptions. They can also assist your trades in shutting down power, water, gas etc.

Inter-property Maintenance. If your property has a leak, fault, or damage that appears to have originated from another property or common infrastructure, contact the Caretaker in the first instance. Owners will sign an agreement for investigative works and Property Agents must send a work order. After investigating, the Caretaker will supply a report to Whittles Body Corporate along with all associated costs for payment.

Whittles then ascertain the responsible party for the issue and resultant payment.

If you see a leak or fault in your property that you believe may affect another apartment or common property, please contact the Caretaker immediately to ensure minimal damage occurs.

INSURANCE – the facts

Any strata building owner's corporation property insurance policy only covers the buildings common property. This includes the exterior walls, plumbing and electrical services up to the individual unit meter boxes. If a resident has to make a claim on this policy, the excess is paid by the individual making the claim. The excess can sometimes make small claims unviable.

While this policy is paid through an owner's quarterly levies, it does not cover owners or tenant contents, most internal unit fixtures, fittings, carpets or tiles. Nor does it cover owners or tenant's property stored in car parks, a storeroom or bicycle storage area. Owners and tenants must take out their own insurance policy for these. But read your policy carefully, there is different coverage for inside your unit and storerooms etc on other levels.

HOUSE RULES (*the building's Body Corporate By-Laws*)

Strata building residents have a few more rule restrictions than a single-dwelling homeowner. However, whether you are an owner or tenant, House Rules exist to ensure more harmonious living for everyone. House Rules also vary between strata properties but mostly cover noise and conduct both inside your unit and on common property, parking, pets, pool times, altering the appearance of your unit, particularly externally and signage at the very least.

Here are a few common issues experienced by owners and tenants:

Noise - Remember your neighbours are just a wall away and while the soundproofing is excellent in The Avenue, noises and voices often carry especially at night. Noise also covers common areas, when you and your guests are arriving or departing and at the pool or barbecue areas.

Balcony – Don't hang clothing or rugs over balcony railings. Not only is it unsightly, but the winds could also blow the items away. Never toss anything over the balcony, particularly cigarette butts. Winds can relocate these on another balcony and have been known to cause apartment building fires.

Car Parks – These are all individually marked per unit. Additional 'Pool' car parking spaces are allocated along the rear wall of Basement 2 for additional residential cars or overnight guests. Don't use another unit's car space without permission. Also, don't store items or packages in your car space, especially batteries, tyres or flammable substances. They invite thief and can be a fire hazard.

Pets - Not every apartment building allows pets, and even if they do, permission must always be sort from the Caretaker or Body Corporate Committee first — before you move in or purchase the pet. Any agreement of a pet by the owner or agent is over-ruled by the building's House Rules. If your building doesn't allow pets, even your visitor's pets are not welcome.

At The Avenue dogs are strictly prohibited and there are very specific rules for animals that are allowed. Also, no animals are allowed on common property unless they are appropriately caged.

For a complete set of The Avenue's House Rules please contact the Caretaker.

BUILDING UPDATES

CAR PARK

Roller Door - Three separate incidents have damaged and broken the car park roller door in recent months. Two were drivers trying to beat the closing door. The other - a resident lost control of their car, hitting the roller when it was closed. All drivers are asked to be more careful and always wait and scan your fob to gain entry.

Exit Boom Gate – Parts have been ordered. The car park is still secured at night with the roller door.

Carpark Thefts - Several basement level break-ins have occurred recently with perpetrators gaining access through the fire stair doors adjacent to the driveway entry.

It has been reported that these doors are occasionally propped open or not fully closed after use. Anyone using the fire stairs is asked to check the door has shut tightly and never prop these doors open, even temporarily. Police have attended, and the Caretaker has a number if you have lost items.

There are CCTV cameras in the basements, but they do not cover everything.

Always be aware, secure goods correctly, never leave valuable or money in your car, ensure storerooms are locked. Report any theft to the Caretaker immediately so they can monitor incidents.

Bicycle Storage Gates - The gates were recently found open, but a technician found no fault and the operating system was reset. If anyone notices them stuck open again, please advise the Caretaker immediately. The gates currently operate via the access control system and have inbuilt battery back up in the event of power failure with manual motor operator releases on the inside of the store to ensure people can exit in an emergency or during a power failure. This was in the building's original certification. The Fire Brigade has now requested the current electric security gates to the bicycle storerooms on both basement levels be fitted with a failsafe egress in the event of a power failure, using a handle at waist height. The Caretaker and Executive Committees are reviewing opinions.

FOOD DELIVERIES - Over the past months, there has been an increase in the number of pre-packaged food deliveries being left in the main foyer area. It's not only unsightly to see boxes strewn around the entrance, it's also an OH&S issue. Plus, some boxes have been taken either accidentally or intentionally. While this is of concern, it is not the responsibility of either the Caretaker, the Body Corporate Manager or the Executive Committees for these losses. All onus is on the resident to ensure they collect their food boxes promptly as the delivery people are leaving them outside of Caretaker office hours.

COVID-19 CLEANING - In line with health guidelines, intensive cleaning in common areas is no longer a necessity and ceased on 30 September. The lift button covers have been removed (they were to protect the buttons from the spray, not for hygiene purposes), and lift hand sanitizer dispensers have also been better positioned in lifts.

All residents and visitors should still follow public health guidelines and: Stay at home if you feel sick - Follow social distancing guidelines - Wash your hands regularly - Sneeze/cough into your elbow. If health notices demand, the intensive regime will re-commence.

STREETSCAPE MAINTENANCE - The Caretaker is responsible for maintaining The Avenue streetscape which also includes the area directly adjacent to The Avenue (both sides of Salonika Street). The street areas in front of Hastings is maintained by Hastings. The Stuart Highway entrance was handed over to Road Networks back in 2019. The Avenue Caretaker maintained the remainder of the street up to the Stuart Highway at their own cost until it became too costly around six months ago. Watering of the streetscape is connected to The Avenue's water supply, as well as the eastern side of Salonika Street. St Johns College previously watered the western side of Salonika Street; however, this has been disconnected.

A private identity owns the fenced area and car parks across from the barber on the side street, and we can't do anything about the 70-odd plants already lost there.

The Salonika streetscape is part of Darwin City Council property. Post Cyclone Marcus when a large number of trees and shrubs were lost, the Council elected to upgrade the streetscape at their cost.

The Principal Executive Committee and Caretaker have been in negotiation with the City of Darwin Council representatives in the hope of providing maintenance assistance. In the meantime, the Caretaker has continued to maintain several smaller areas that aren't part of The Avenue including the street corner topiaries.

CHOCKING APARTMENT DOORS OPEN - Several apartment occupants have been propping open their apartment doors to the common foyer. The front door to your apartment is a fire-rated door. Obstruction and chocking open (or closed) ANY fire door, including apartment doors, is an offence. Additionally, all residential foyers are equipped with several smoke detectors connected to the main building fire system that, if activated, result in a full-scale evacuation alarm. If any of these detectors activate as a result of cooking smoke or any type of aerosol coming from an open apartment door, the occupant will be fully liable for the call-out fee of a false alarm by NTFRS. This fee is in excess of \$1,000. To ensure the safety of all occupants, it is essential that the front door to all apartments and the fire doors to the fire stairs are closed at all times. If you see any front doors being chocked open, please report it immediately to the Caretaker.

FIRE ALARMS - Fire alarm activation is often considered an inconvenience, especially when the cause is unknown or not apparent to residents. After several recent activations, and to avoid resident complacency, the Caretaker will advise occupants of the reason as soon as practical afterwards – via The Avenue Community Info Facebook page and email.

SOLAR SYSTEM PERFORMANCE - The solar system has been operating for eight months and offsets the power that would typically come from Jacana Energy for the common areas of the precinct. Common property power is relatively constant throughout the day and on weekends. Fixed loads such as the comms room power, water and sewer systems are consistent, and data collection has shown stability over the past three months, generating 16369MW equalling \$4,910 per quarter. If this continues, it will save the Body Corporate \$19,642 per annum. The permanent web-based display in the main foyer shows the system at work.