

17 October 2011

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RE: AFTER HOURS MEETINGS

Most people by now would be aware of the ever increasing requirements of employers to meet with the responsibilities imposed on them by the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Like most professions, the owners corporation management industry has had to change to meet the requirements.

In Victoria it is common place for owners corporations to have their meetings start in the evening sometimes as late as 8.00pm. Owners corporations managers have therefore been working a normal work week of 40 plus hours, and then have had to attend regular evening owners corporation meetings. The average manager would attend on average 75-90 annual general meetings (AGM) in a year, as well as any special meetings.

The additional pressure of the night meetings has created a stressful environment for some managers. Recruiting people to work in the industry has become increasingly difficult due to the after hours meeting component. In order to deal with this many firms charge for after hours meetings. In some cases they have had to advise clients that they will no longer be able to attend meetings out of hours. Managers that work a normal week and then attend after hours meeting are often away from their families etc. Without addressing the issue of long hours it is impossible to create a less stressful environment for managers.

To add to this situation most of you would have heard about the tragic death of a real estate property Manager whilst in the course of showing a person a property. We understand that there have also been a number of incidents where property managers have been threatened or attacked. As a result, real estate agents have reviewed their procedures.

Our industry, management of owners corporations, draws similar parallels to that of the real estate industry. Managers are required to attend meetings, where in the majority of cases, they are unaware of whom will be in attendance. In many cases at the end of "on site" meetings, managers are required to make their way to their vehicles often in the dark. Both of these issues place real safety risks on employers. Many managers have raised these concerns and as a result meetings have in some cases moved to meeting rooms or the managers office. In many cases these venues provided better and more comfortable facilities. However this is simply just relocating the problem, in that no other support person is around in the case of an emergency.

Under the provision of the Occupational Health and Safety Act employers must provide a stress free and safe working environment, and failure to do so can be met with significant punitive and financial penalties. It is interesting to note that few other professions offer the facility of after hours consultation, meetings etc, yet our members have done so for years. SCA (Vic) believes that in order for managers to meet OH&S requirements a change must take place.

In the past meetings were supposedly performed “on site” and after hours in order to assist members in being able to attend meetings. It should be noted that meetings booked in advance and held during office hours are in many cases better attended. This is a simple process of booking the next AGM well in advance, thereby allowing members the ability to put dates in their diaries and plan ahead. Managers that have already done this report that meetings in the early morning and around 4.00pm are often better attended than those held out of hours.

SCA (Vic) recommends to its members that in order to meet with the provisions of the OH&S Act, they must ensure the safety of not only managers but also members of owners corporations themselves. Your owners corporation manager will discuss these requirements with you in due course. As an institute we ask that owners corporation members be aware of the above. When the time comes for booking the next meeting we ask that you consider a starting time that allows a meeting to finish during day light hours to ensure the safety of all attendees. Remember it is one meeting for the members of the owners corporation, however one of many for the manager. Owners corporations will save the cost of after hours meetings, provide a safer environment for members to leave during day light hours and not impinge on theirs or managers family commitments. In most cases owners corporations only meet once a year at their AGM, therefore this should not be difficult.

Yours faithfully,
Strata Community Australia (Vic) Inc



Stephen Raff
President