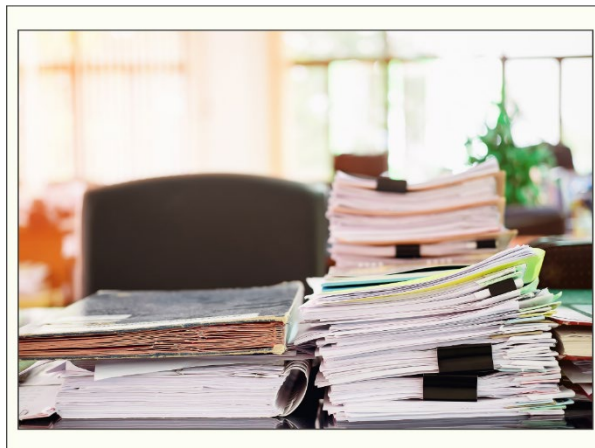




COMMUNICATION & GOVERNANCE PROTOCOLS IN STRATA COMMUNITIES

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1. Overview

What this guide covers

Communication and governance protocols define how information, requests, complaints, instructions and decisions are managed within a strata community.

They apply to communication between key stakeholders, including:

- lot owners
- occupiers
- Owners Corporation Committees
- Strata Managers
- Building Managers
- consultants
- contractors and service providers

Clear protocols help ensure matters are directed to the right person, handled through the appropriate process and recorded where required.

This guide explains practical approaches for:

- directing enquiries and requests
- clarifying decision-making authority
- managing communication between the Committee and Strata Manager
- directing operational and technical issues appropriately
- setting reasonable response expectations
- maintaining respectful communication
- managing high-volume or repeated correspondence
- responding to abusive, intimidating or threatening conduct
- documenting advice, decisions and instructions
- establishing reasonable escalation pathways

Communication protocols should not prevent lot owners or occupiers from raising legitimate matters. Their purpose is to support fair access, consistent processes and the efficient use of Owners Corporation resources.

Why communication and governance must be considered together

Communication in strata is not only about sending and receiving messages.

Many communications involve:

- requests for decisions
- approval of expenditure
- maintenance instructions
- complaints about common property
- rule enforcement
- contractor performance
- safety concerns
- building defects
- disputes between stakeholders

These matters may require a decision from the Committee or Owners Corporation, operational coordination by a Strata Manager or Building Manager, or independent advice from a suitably qualified professional.

Clear governance protocols help establish:

- who receives the matter
- who gathers the required information
- who has authority to decide
- who provides technical or professional advice
- who carries out the approved action
- how the decision and reasons are recorded
- who communicates the outcome

Without this clarity, communication can become confused, duplicated or directed to someone who does not have the authority or expertise to respond.

Why it matters to Owners Corporations

Poor communication can result in:

- delays and frustration
- duplicated requests
- conflicting instructions
- misunderstandings about responsibilities

- unrealistic expectations
- increased conflict
- important information being overlooked
- inefficient use of management resources
- decisions being made without sufficient evidence
- poor records of advice and decisions

Clear communication and governance protocols support:

- consistent messaging
- efficient and transparent decision-making
- appropriate use of the Strata Manager's role
- clear separation between governance, advice and operational delivery
- fair treatment of all stakeholders
- reliable record keeping
- better use of professional advice
- reduced administrative burden
- stronger accountability
- better outcomes for the community

Effective protocols may also reduce governance, insurance and legal risks by supporting consistent instructions, documented decisions and transparent processes.

They can help protect employees, contractors, volunteers and Committee members from repeated unreasonable, intimidating or abusive behaviour. The member reviewer particularly recommended recognising communication conduct as a possible workplace health and safety issue, rather than treating it only as a customer service concern.

Respectful communication and workplace safety

Most disagreements can be managed through clear, factual and respectful communication. However, repeated conduct may become more serious where it involves:

- bullying
- personal attacks
- intimidation
- threats
- abusive language
- excessive and repeated demands
- behaviour affecting a person's health, safety or wellbeing

Strata management businesses have responsibilities to protect their employees from workplace health and safety risks arising from their work. Owners Corporations should also consider the wellbeing of Committee members, Building Managers, contractors and other people involved in managing the property.

Commercial or customer service considerations should not override workplace safety.

A Respectful Behaviour or Workplace Behaviour Policy can assist by setting clear expectations and providing escalation pathways when conduct becomes inappropriate.

Such policies may help protect:

- Strata Managers and other employees
- Committee members and volunteers
- Building Managers
- contractors and consultants
- the Owners Corporation and broader community

Any response should remain reasonable and proportionate to the conduct involved.

Respect for professional time

Strata Managers commonly manage several Owners Corporations and balance:

- urgent safety and maintenance matters
- meetings and statutory processes
- financial administration
- insurance matters
- contractor coordination
- correspondence from owners and residents
- instructions from Committees
- competing deadlines across different properties

An acknowledgement within approximately 48 hours may be a reasonable general expectation for a non-urgent matter. This does not mean every issue can be fully investigated or resolved within that period.

Longer timeframes may be required where:

- further information is needed
- quotations must be obtained
- a contractor must attend
- independent advice is required
- the Committee must consider the matter
- a formal resolution is needed
- the issue involves several parties

Clear response expectations protect professional time while helping owners and residents understand what will happen next.

Where this guide commonly applies

Communication and governance protocols may assist with:

- maintenance requests
- complaints and disputes
- requests for approvals or permissions
- contractor coordination
- Committee instructions
- resident enquiries
- rule and conduct issues
- insurance matters
- building defect concerns
- safety and compliance issues
- procurement and quotation processes
- emergency incidents
- high-volume correspondence
- abusive or threatening communication

Who should read this guide

This guide is intended for:

- lot owners
- occupiers
- Owners Corporation Committee members
- Strata Managers

- Building Managers
- Facilities Managers
- strata management business owners and supervisors
- contractors and consultants working with Owners Corporations

Scope of this guide

This guide provides practical information about communication and governance protocols within Victorian strata communities.

It does not prescribe one communication structure for every Owners Corporation. The appropriate process will depend on:

- the size and complexity of the property
- the management structure
- contracts and delegated authorities
- the nature and urgency of the matter
- the people involved
- any safety or wellbeing concerns
- the rights and obligations of the parties

This guide is not intended to provide legal advice about restricting an owner's communication, responding to threats, resolving formal disputes or managing workplace health and safety duties. Independent advice should be considered where:

- conduct is threatening or creates an immediate safety concern
- repeated behaviour may affect worker health or wellbeing
- significant communication restrictions are proposed
- a dispute may proceed to Consumer Affairs Victoria or VCAT
- legal rights or obligations are uncertain
- serious building, safety or compliance issues are involved

2. Legislative and Governance Framework

Communication protocols operate within the Owners Corporation's wider legal and governance responsibilities.

Relevant Victorian legislation may include:

- Owners Corporations Act 2006 (Vic)
- Owners Corporations Regulations 2018 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)

Other laws or professional obligations may apply depending on the circumstances.

Key governance principles

The Owners Corporation:

- acts through resolutions of the Owners Corporation or Committee
- makes decisions about common property, expenditure and governance matters
- remains responsible for decisions made on its behalf
- should obtain suitable professional advice where significant technical, safety, compliance or financial issues arise
- must maintain appropriate records and correspondence

The Committee:

- represents the Owners Corporation between general meetings
- acts within the authority available to it
- provides governance and oversight
- considers information and recommendations
- is not necessarily qualified to make technical assessments
- should support significant decisions with reliable evidence and appropriate professional advice

The Strata Manager:

- acts within the authority and instructions given by the Owners Corporation
- assists with administration, financial management and implementation
- gathers information and coordinates communication
- refers matters to the Committee or Owners Corporation where a decision is required
- is generally not the decision-maker
- should not be expected to provide legal, engineering or other specialist advice unless appropriately qualified and engaged

Many delays occur because a matter requires further information, quotations, professional advice or a decision by the Committee or Owners Corporation before an outcome can be communicated.

Decision-making is different from implementation

A communication protocol should distinguish between:

- who makes the decision
- who provides advice
- who coordinates the approved response
- who performs the work

For example:

Role	Primary responsibility
Owners Corporation	Makes decisions within its powers and responsibilities
Committee	Acts within its authority and provides governance oversight
Strata Manager	Provides administration, coordination and implementation within their authority
Building Manager	Coordinates day-to-day building operations where engaged
Consultant	Provides independent professional or technical advice
Contractor	Performs work within the approved scope

These descriptions are general only. Actual responsibilities depend on legislation, contracts, delegations and the management arrangements for the property.

The role distinction responds directly to the reviewer's recommendation that the guide separate decision-making authority from operational responsibilities.

Building Managers and technical matters

Building Managers play an important role in identifying issues, coordinating access and supporting day-to-day operations.

However, they are not automatically the appropriate professional advisers for complex matters involving:

- structural defects
- fire safety
- waterproofing
- engineering matters
- significant building compliance issues
- major safety risks
- substantial expenditure

Where an issue carries significant technical, safety, compliance or financial risk, advice should be obtained from an appropriately qualified and independent professional.

Committee members are also governance decision-makers rather than technical experts. Significant decisions should therefore be evidence-based and supported by appropriate reports or advice.

Workplace health and safety

Repeated bullying, intimidation, threats or abusive communication may create workplace health and safety risks.

Strata management businesses should have internal processes for:

- reporting inappropriate conduct
- escalating risks to supervisors or employers
- supporting affected staff
- documenting repeated behaviour
- assessing whether communication boundaries are required
- seeking professional advice where necessary

Owners Corporations should support these arrangements and avoid placing employees or volunteers in situations where repeated abuse is treated as an unavoidable part of the role.

Where conduct creates an immediate risk of harm, emergency assistance may be required.

Record keeping and accountability

Important communications and decisions should be recorded appropriately.

Where significant safety, compliance, building or financial risks are involved, records may include:

- the original request or complaint
- relevant correspondence
- inspection reports or professional advice
- quotations and procurement information
- disclosed conflicts of interest
- the Committee or Owners Corporation resolution
- reasons for the decision where appropriate
- instructions issued
- actions taken
- the final outcome

Good records support transparency, continuity and accountability. They also assist future Committees and managers to understand how and why a decision was made.

The existing guide already identifies record keeping and consistent communication as key benefits. The expanded wording reflects the reviewer's recommendation to record professional advice, resolutions and significant governance matters more clearly.

Glossary of Terms

Owners Corporation

The legal entity responsible for managing common property and shared obligations.

Committee

The elected group that represents the Owners Corporation between general meetings and acts within the authority available to it.

Strata Manager

A professional engaged to assist the Owners Corporation with administration, financial management, coordination and implementation.

Building Manager

A person or provider engaged to coordinate day-to-day building operations within an agreed scope.

Decision-making authority

The legal or delegated power to make a decision, approve expenditure or issue an instruction on behalf of the Owners Corporation.

Operational responsibility

Responsibility for coordinating or carrying out an approved activity rather than deciding whether it should occur.

Professional advice

Independent advice provided by a suitably qualified professional within their area of expertise.

Communication protocol

A documented process setting out how communication will be received, directed, considered, responded to and recorded.

Escalation pathway

An agreed process for referring a matter to a higher level of authority, expertise or support when it cannot be resolved through the usual communication process.

3. Common Communication and Governance Issues

Communication problems rarely arise from a single message. They usually develop where responsibilities, authority, expectations or escalation pathways are unclear.

The following issues frequently arise in strata communities.

Multiple and Conflicting Instructions

Problems may occur where several Committee members separately contact the Strata Manager, Building Manager, consultant or contractor.

This can result in:

- duplicated requests
- conflicting instructions
- uncertainty about who has authority
- delays while instructions are confirmed
- contractors acting outside an approved scope
- inconsistent information being provided to owners and residents

A nominated Committee contact can help coordinate communication, but this does not prevent other Committee members from participating in decisions.

The nominated contact should not make decisions outside their authority or replace the Committee's formal decision-making process.

Misunderstanding the Strata Manager's Role

The Strata Manager assists with administration, coordination and implementation but is generally not the decision-maker.

Common misunderstandings include expecting the Strata Manager to:

- approve expenditure without authority
- determine disputed governance matters personally
- provide technical advice outside their expertise
- enforce rules without an Owners Corporation decision
- immediately resolve matters requiring Committee consideration
- accept personal responsibility for decisions made by the Owners Corporation

Where a decision is required, the Strata Manager may need to gather information, obtain quotations or professional advice and refer the matter to the Committee or Owners Corporation.

Directing Operational Matters to the Wrong Person

Not every matter needs to be managed through the same channel. For example:

- routine onsite matters may be directed to the Building Manager where one is engaged
- governance and financial matters may be directed through the Strata Manager
- technical issues may require an independent consultant
- physical works should be carried out by a suitably qualified contractor
- matters requiring authority must be decided by the Committee or Owners Corporation

Directing every issue to the Strata Manager can create unnecessary delays and communication overload.

However, the Strata Manager may remain the central point for recording and directing matters where this is the agreed arrangement for the building.

Unrealistic Response Expectations

Strata Managers often manage several Owners Corporations and must balance urgent matters, meetings, financial administration, contractor coordination and statutory processes.

A person raising an issue may expect an immediate answer, even where:

- more information is required
- the issue must be inspected
- quotations are needed
- the Committee must consider the matter
- independent advice is required
- a formal resolution is necessary

An acknowledgement is different from a final response.

Clear expectations about the next step and likely timeframe can reduce frustration while allowing the matter to be handled properly.

Repeated or High-Volume Communication

Repeated requests about the same issue can consume significant time without changing the Owners Corporation's decision.

Common examples include:

- sending the same request to several people
- sending several emails about one issue
- repeatedly seeking reconsideration without new information
- adding unrelated issues to existing email chains
- contacting contractors directly after a decision has been made
- expecting immediate responses to non-urgent matters

Owners and occupiers remain entitled to raise legitimate concerns.

However, reasonable communication protocols may be required where correspondence becomes excessive, repetitive or unmanageable.

Aggressive, Intimidating or Abusive Communication

Disagreement does not justify abusive or threatening conduct.

Problematic communication may include:

- personal attacks
- threats
- intimidation
- discriminatory or offensive language
- repeated accusations directed at an individual
- demands made in an aggressive or unreasonable manner
- conduct affecting a worker's or volunteer's health or wellbeing

Repeated behaviour of this kind may become a workplace health and safety concern.

It should be documented and managed through appropriate Owners Corporation and workplace escalation processes.

Poorly Documented Decisions

Governance problems can arise where important decisions are discussed informally but not properly recorded.

Examples include:

- verbal instructions to contractors
- decisions made through incomplete email discussions
- professional advice not retained
- conflicts of interest not disclosed
- reasons for significant decisions not recorded
- uncertainty about whether approval was actually given

Incomplete records can make it difficult to establish:

- what was decided
- who had authority
- what advice was considered
- why a particular option was chosen
- what instructions were issued
- whether the action was completed

Significant decisions should be supported by clear records and formal resolutions where required.

Decisions Without Appropriate Professional Advice

Committees are governance bodies and are not necessarily technical experts. Risks may arise where a Committee relies only on informal opinions when considering:

- structural defects
- fire safety
- waterproofing
- major compliance issues
- significant safety risks
- complex insurance matters
- major expenditure

A Building Manager or contractor may provide useful operational information, but this does not automatically replace independent professional advice.

Where the issue involves significant risk or expenditure, the Owners Corporation should obtain advice from a suitably qualified professional.

Procurement and Conflicts of Interest

Communication during procurement should be transparent and properly documented.

Common issues include:

- selecting a provider on price alone
- unclear scopes of work
- incomplete quotation comparisons
- undisclosed relationships with suppliers
- Committee members participating despite a conflict
- informal instructions changing the approved scope
- failure to record why a provider was selected

Procurement decisions should consider qualifications, experience, capability, scope, insurance, safety, service quality and overall value.

Any actual or potential conflict of interest should be disclosed and managed before a decision is made.

Communication Overload and Important Matters Being Missed

High volumes of routine operational correspondence can make it harder to identify matters requiring urgent governance, compliance or financial attention.

This risk increases where:

- all matters are directed to one person
- email subject lines are unclear
- several issues are combined in one message
- there is no agreed escalation process
- urgent and routine matters use the same channel
- responsibilities between the Strata Manager and onsite team are unclear

Clear role boundaries and escalation pathways help ensure that the right matters reach the right person.

Common Issues at a Glance

Issue	Possible consequence
Multiple instruction pathways	Conflicting directions and delay
Unclear role boundaries	Matters directed to the wrong person
Unrealistic response expectations	Frustration and repeated follow-up
High-volume communication	Administrative burden and missed priorities
Abusive behaviour	Workplace health and safety concerns
Poor records	Unclear authority and weak accountability
Limited professional advice	Decisions unsupported by suitable evidence
Procurement conflicts	Reduced trust and challenged decisions

4. Best Practice Approach

Effective communication protocols should make it easier for legitimate matters to be raised and handled fairly.

They should not be used to avoid accountability or prevent reasonable participation in Owners Corporation affairs.

Establish Clear Communication Channels

The Owners Corporation should identify where different matters should be directed.

A practical structure may include:

- governance, financial and administrative matters through the Strata Manager
- day-to-day operational matters through the Building Manager where engaged
- urgent safety or emergency issues through the nominated emergency channel
- technical matters through an appropriately qualified consultant
- contractor instructions through the person authorised to issue them
- formal decisions through the Committee or Owners Corporation

These arrangements should be communicated to owners, occupiers, Committee members and service providers.

Nominate a Primary Committee Contact

The Committee may appoint one member as the main liaison with the Strata Manager.

This can support:

- consistent instructions
- reduced duplication
- clearer priorities
- easier record keeping
- more efficient communication

The nominated contact should act as a communication coordinator rather than an independent decision-maker.

Committee decisions must still be made through the proper process.

Separate Urgent and Non-Urgent Matters

The communication protocol should explain what constitutes an emergency or urgent issue.

Examples may include:

- fire or smoke
- immediate risk to health or safety
- significant water ingress
- serious security incidents
- major property damage
- essential service failure
- threats of immediate harm

Routine maintenance requests, general complaints and administrative enquiries should use the standard communication channel.

Emergency contact arrangements should not be used for ordinary matters.

Set Reasonable Response Expectations

For non-urgent matters, an acknowledgement within approximately 48 hours may be a reasonable general expectation.

This does not guarantee that the matter will be resolved within that period.

An acknowledgement should, where possible, explain:

- that the request has been received
- whether further information is needed
- who will consider the matter
- whether Committee approval is required
- the expected next step
- an indicative timeframe where one can reasonably be given

Where the matter will take longer, an update should be provided when practical.

Use Clear and Complete Requests

Owners, occupiers and Committee members can help matters progress by providing:

- a clear description of the issue
- the location
- photographs where useful
- dates and relevant history
- details of any immediate risk
- the outcome being requested
- contact details for access where required

Where several issues are raised, they should be clearly separated.

A useful subject line and one consolidated email can make the request easier to assess and record.

Maintain Professional Communication

All parties should:

- communicate respectfully
- remain factual
- avoid personal attacks
- avoid inflammatory or threatening language
- focus on the issue rather than the individual
- allow reasonable time for a response
- avoid copying unnecessary recipients
- use agreed communication channels

Professional communication does not require agreement.

It allows disagreement to be addressed without creating additional conflict or safety concerns.

Adopt a Respectful Behaviour Policy

An Owners Corporation may consider adopting a Respectful Behaviour or Workplace Behaviour Policy.

The policy may address:

- expected standards of communication
- bullying, intimidation and threats
- repeated unreasonable demands
- treatment of employees, volunteers and contractors
- internal reporting pathways
- staged warnings and escalation
- when communication restrictions may be considered
- access for genuine urgent or safety matters
- review of any restrictions imposed

The policy should be reasonable, proportionate and applied consistently.

It should protect legitimate participation while providing a process for managing harmful conduct.

Establish Internal Workplace Escalation

Strata management businesses should have clear internal procedures for staff who receive abusive, threatening or persistent communication.

These may include:

- reporting the conduct to a supervisor
- retaining copies of communications
- assessing health and safety risks
- reallocating contact where appropriate
- issuing a formal communication warning
- supporting affected employees
- seeking workplace health and safety advice
- contacting emergency services where immediate threats arise

Commercial concerns should not prevent reasonable steps being taken to protect staff.

Direct Matters According to Role and Expertise

Before responding, determine whether the matter is primarily:

- a governance decision
- an administrative matter
- an operational issue
- a technical question
- a safety concern
- a formal dispute

The person receiving the request should direct it to the appropriate person rather than attempting to answer outside their role or expertise.

Obtain Independent Advice Where Required

Independent advice should be considered where a matter involves:

- significant health or safety risks
- complex defects
- building compliance
- structural or fire matters
- waterproofing or engineering issues
- major procurement
- insurance or legal implications
- substantial expenditure

Professional advice should be:

- relevant to the issue
- prepared by a suitably qualified person
- clear about assumptions and limitations
- provided to the appropriate decision-maker
- retained with the Owners Corporation's records

Document Significant Decisions

Where a matter involves significant risk, cost or community impact, the Owners Corporation should record:

- the issue considered
- information and advice received
- disclosed conflicts of interest
- available options
- the resolution or authority relied upon
- reasons for the decision where appropriate
- instructions issued
- required follow-up
- the final outcome

This supports accountability and helps future Committee members and managers understand the decision.

Manage Procurement Transparently

Procurement communication should follow a consistent process.

Good practice includes:

- preparing a clear scope
- providing the same information to competing providers
- assessing qualifications and capability
- reviewing insurance and compliance documents
- comparing the full service offered
- identifying exclusions and assumptions
- disclosing conflicts of interest
- documenting the assessment and decision
- issuing instructions through an authorised person

The lowest price may not represent the best value where capability, safety, service quality or risk management is important.

Balance Individual Requests With Community Needs

Strata Managers and Committees must balance the interests of individual owners and occupiers with the needs of the whole Owners Corporation.

Communication protocols should support:

- fair access to management resources
- consistent treatment
- timely attention to genuine matters
- reasonable protection of professional and volunteer time
- continued access for urgent and safety issues

Protocols should not be used to silence disagreement or avoid responding to legitimate matters.

Managing Difficult or High-Volume Communication

Where communication becomes excessive, repetitive or unreasonable, the Owners Corporation may introduce a staged and proportionate response.

Stage 1 – Clarify Expectations

Explain:

- the correct communication channel
- expected response timeframes
- the need to consolidate requests
- respectful behaviour expectations
- the role of the Strata Manager and Committee

Stage 2 – Provide a Formal Reminder

Where the conduct continues, provide a written reminder identifying:

- the communication concern
- the expected change
- the process to be followed
- the consequence if the conduct continues

Stage 3 – Adopt a Communication Protocol

A Committee-approved protocol may require:

- communication through one nominated channel
- one consolidated email within a reasonable period
- clear identification of issues requiring consideration
- one consolidated response
- use of an agreed subject line or form

The protocol should preserve access for genuine emergencies and important safety matters.

Stage 4 – Apply Reasonable Restrictions

Further restrictions should only be considered where the earlier steps have not worked.

Any restriction should be:

- supported by evidence
- reasonable and proportionate
- documented through the appropriate governance process
- applied consistently
- limited to what is necessary
- reviewed periodically
- subject to independent advice where appropriate

Stage 5 – Seek Further Advice or Assistance

Depending on the matter, assistance may include:

- internal workplace health and safety escalation
- mediation
- independent specialist advice
- Consumer Affairs Victoria
- VCAT
- legal advice
- police or emergency services where immediate threats arise

Do Not Restrict Genuine Emergencies

Any communication protocol should allow urgent reports involving:

- health and safety
- fire
- security
- significant water ingress
- serious property damage
- essential services
- threats of immediate harm

Emergency reports should contain enough information to allow the risk to be assessed and an appropriate response arranged.

Review Protocols Regularly

Communication arrangements should be reviewed where:

- the building's management structure changes
- a Building Manager or new service provider is appointed
- recurring communication problems arise
- the existing process creates delays or duplication
- technology or resident platforms change
- a communication restriction is in place
- workplace health and safety concerns have been raised

The aim is to maintain a process that remains fair, practical and suitable for the community.

5. Manager / Committee Guidance

Effective communication protocols are most successful when they are understood and consistently applied by everyone involved in the management of the Owners Corporation.

This section provides practical guidance for Committees, Strata Managers and other stakeholders when establishing or reviewing communication arrangements.

Clarify roles before communicating

Before raising or responding to a matter, identify:

- who has authority to make the decision
- who is responsible for coordinating the matter
- whether independent professional advice is required
- who should communicate the outcome
- whether the issue is operational, governance or technical in nature

Directing matters to the appropriate person from the outset helps reduce delays, duplication and misunderstandings.

Establish realistic expectations

Owners and occupiers should understand that many requests require investigation or approval before a final response can be provided.

Committees should recognise that Strata Managers balance competing priorities across multiple Owners Corporations, including:

- urgent maintenance
- financial administration
- meetings and statutory obligations
- insurance matters
- contractor coordination
- correspondence from owners and residents

Setting realistic expectations about response times helps reduce unnecessary follow-up and supports more efficient use of management resources.

Support evidence-based decision-making

Committees are responsible for governance rather than providing technical advice.

Before making significant decisions, consider whether:

- sufficient information has been gathered
- independent professional advice is required
- quotations have been obtained where appropriate
- safety, compliance or legal issues have been identified
- alternative options have been properly assessed

Evidence-based decisions are generally more transparent, defensible and consistent.

Respect professional boundaries

Each participant has a different role.

Committee members should avoid directing contractors or consultants independently where this conflicts with agreed communication pathways.

Similarly, Strata Managers should not be expected to provide engineering, legal or other specialist advice unless specifically qualified and engaged to do so.

Building Managers, consultants and contractors should operate within their agreed scope and refer governance decisions back to the Owners Corporation where appropriate.

Document significant decisions

Where a matter involves significant expenditure, safety, compliance or community impact, ensure appropriate records are retained.

This may include:

- correspondence
- professional reports
- quotations
- Committee resolutions
- disclosed conflicts of interest
- reasons for significant decisions
- instructions issued
- follow-up actions

Good record keeping supports continuity, accountability and informed future decision-making.

Maintain respectful communication

Owners Corporations should encourage communication that is:

- respectful
- factual
- constructive
- relevant
- solution-focused

Disagreement is a normal part of community living.

However, personal attacks, intimidation, bullying or abusive conduct should not be accepted as part of the management process.

Where communication becomes unreasonable, the Owners Corporation should respond consistently, proportionately and in accordance with its communication protocols.

Recognise workplace health and safety obligations

Repeated abusive or intimidating behaviour may affect the health and safety of:

- Strata Managers
- Building Managers
- contractors
- Committee members
- administrative staff

Where behaviour presents an ongoing workplace health and safety concern, it should be reported and managed through appropriate internal procedures.

Commercial considerations or customer service expectations should not override workplace health and safety obligations.

Procurement and communication

Communication relating to procurement should be transparent and well documented.

When selecting consultants or contractors, Committees should consider:

- qualifications and experience
- scope of services
- capability and resources
- insurance and compliance
- previous performance
- value for money
- conflicts of interest

Price should be considered alongside quality, capability and the needs of the Owners Corporation.

Questions for Committees

Before responding to or deciding a matter, ask:

- Is this the correct communication channel?
- Who has authority to make the decision?
- Is this an operational, governance or technical issue?
- Do we have sufficient information?

- Is independent professional advice required?
- Have conflicts of interest been disclosed?
- Have all relevant stakeholders been consulted where appropriate?
- Will the decision be properly documented?
- Have we communicated realistic expectations regarding timing?
- Are workplace health and safety issues involved?

Good governance checklist

Well-managed communication protocols generally include:

- clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- a nominated communication pathway
- realistic response expectations
- documented decision-making processes
- respectful communication standards
- evidence-based Committee decisions
- appropriate use of independent professional advice
- transparent procurement processes
- comprehensive record keeping
- periodic review of communication protocols

6. Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who should owners contact about an Owners Corporation issue?

Owners and occupiers should generally communicate through the agreed Owners Corporation communication channel, which is commonly the Strata Manager unless another arrangement has been established.

The Strata Manager can then coordinate the matter or refer it to the appropriate decision-maker or service provider.

Q. Why can't the Strata Manager make every decision?

Most decisions remain the responsibility of the Owners Corporation or Committee.

The Strata Manager generally acts within delegated authority, coordinates information and implements decisions, but is not usually authorised to make governance decisions independently.

Q. Why does it sometimes take longer to receive a response?

Many matters require:

- Committee consideration
- quotations
- contractor inspections
- independent professional advice
- legal advice
- further investigation

A prompt acknowledgement does not necessarily mean the issue can be resolved immediately.

Q. What is the role of the Committee?

The Committee provides governance and oversight between general meetings.

It considers information, makes decisions within its authority and acts on behalf of the Owners Corporation.

Committee members are not necessarily technical experts and should seek appropriate professional advice where required.

Q. What is the role of a Building Manager?

A Building Manager generally coordinates day-to-day building operations within their agreed scope.

This may include contractor coordination, inspections and operational matters.

Complex structural, engineering, fire safety or major compliance issues should generally be referred to appropriately qualified professionals.

Q. Can communication become a workplace health and safety issue?

Yes.

Repeated bullying, intimidation, threats or abusive behaviour may create workplace health and safety risks for employees, contractors, volunteers and Committee members.

Such behaviour should be managed through appropriate workplace and Owners Corporation procedures.

Q. Can the Owners Corporation limit excessive communication?

Reasonable communication protocols may be implemented where communication becomes excessive, repetitive or unreasonable.

Any protocol should be:

- reasonable
- proportionate
- consistently applied
- appropriately documented
- periodically reviewed

It should not prevent owners or occupiers from raising legitimate concerns or reporting genuine emergencies.

Q. Why is documenting decisions so important?

Good records help demonstrate:

- what information was considered
- what advice was obtained
- who made the decision
- why the decision was made
- what actions were authorised

This supports transparency, continuity and good governance.

Q. What should be considered when appointing contractors or consultants?

Appointments should consider:

- qualifications
- experience
- scope of services
- capability
- insurance
- compliance
- value for money
- conflicts of interest

Price alone should not determine the appointment where safety, capability or quality are important considerations.

Q. When should independent professional advice be obtained?

Independent advice should be considered where a matter involves:

- significant safety risks
- structural issues
- fire safety
- waterproofing
- engineering matters
- major building compliance
- substantial expenditure
- legal or insurance issues

Seeking appropriate advice helps support informed and evidence-based decisions.

7. Emerging Issues

Communication within strata communities continues to evolve as technology, legislative expectations and community expectations change.

Owners Corporations, Committees and Strata Managers are increasingly required to manage larger volumes of information, more complex stakeholder relationships and higher expectations for timely, transparent and professional communication.

While the principles of good governance remain unchanged, the way communication is managed will continue to develop.

Artificial intelligence and digital communication

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly being used to assist with:

- drafting correspondence
- summarising information
- preparing reports
- organising meeting papers
- reviewing documents
- identifying potential issues
- improving administrative efficiency

AI can be a valuable support tool, but it should not replace professional judgement.

Before AI-generated content is issued, it should be reviewed to ensure it:

- is accurate
- reflects the circumstances of the Owners Corporation
- maintains an appropriate professional tone
- protects confidential and personal information
- complies with legislative and governance requirements

AI should assist communication—not replace thoughtful decision-making or professional responsibility.

Increasing communication complexity

The role of the Strata Manager continues to evolve as resident expectations increase, regulatory obligations become more complex and digital technologies make it easier for lot owners and residents to access information, prepare detailed enquiries and escalate concerns.

The result is not simply a greater volume of communication, but a significant increase in the complexity of the enquiries being received. Many now require careful consideration of legislative requirements, governance processes, financial implications and the specific circumstances of the Owners Corporation.

As these demands continue to grow, the value of a clearly defined management structure becomes increasingly important. A coordinated management approach enables routine operational matters to be managed by the Building Manager, Facilities Manager or concierge team where appropriate, while allowing the Strata Manager to focus on governance, compliance, financial management and the strategic responsibilities that require their professional expertise.

Clearly documented role boundaries, communication protocols and escalation pathways help ensure enquiries are directed to the appropriate person, reduce duplication and minimise the risk of important matters being overlooked.

Greater reliance on digital platforms

Many Owners Corporations now communicate through:

- owner portals
- online maintenance systems
- electronic voting platforms
- email distribution systems
- digital document management systems
- cloud-based record storage

These systems can improve accessibility, efficiency and transparency.

However, they also require:

- secure access controls
- reliable record keeping
- appropriate user permissions
- protection of personal information
- consistent document management practices

Digital systems should support good governance rather than create additional risks.

Cyber security and privacy

As communication increasingly occurs electronically, Owners Corporations should remain aware of cyber security and privacy risks.

Potential issues include:

- phishing emails
- unauthorised access to records
- compromised email accounts
- fraudulent payment requests
- accidental disclosure of personal information
- insecure document sharing

Appropriate security measures, staff awareness and verification processes can help reduce these risks.

Psychological health and respectful workplaces

There is increasing recognition that repeated unreasonable behaviour can affect psychological health and workplace safety.

Strata Managers, Building Managers, contractors, Committee members and administrative staff should all be able to perform their roles without being subjected to bullying, intimidation or abuse.

Owners Corporations are increasingly adopting respectful behaviour expectations and clearer escalation procedures to support safer and more productive working relationships.

Increasing governance expectations

Owners increasingly expect decisions to be:

- transparent
- evidence-based
- well documented
- communicated clearly
- supported by appropriate professional advice

At the same time, legislative responsibilities continue to evolve, requiring Committees and Strata Managers to maintain high standards of governance, documentation and accountability.

Strong communication protocols help support these expectations.

More complex communities

Many strata communities are becoming larger and more diverse.

Mixed-use developments, staged developments and communities with extensive shared facilities often involve:

- multiple Committees
- Building Managers
- Facilities Managers
- concierge teams
- specialist consultants
- numerous contractors

These arrangements increase the importance of:

- clearly defined responsibilities
- structured reporting
- agreed communication pathways
- documented escalation processes
- collaborative working relationships

Without these arrangements, communication can become fragmented and inefficient.

Looking ahead

Future communication practices are likely to place greater emphasis on collaboration, transparency and accountability.

Technology will continue to improve the efficiency of communication, but effective governance will still depend on clearly defined roles, professional judgement and respectful engagement between all participants.

Owners Corporations that regularly review their communication protocols and adapt them to changing operational needs will be better placed to support effective decision-making, manage increasing community expectations and maintain positive working relationships.

8. Key Takeaways

Effective communication is fundamental to good strata governance.

While communication methods continue to evolve, the underlying principles remain the same: communicate respectfully, direct matters to the appropriate person, make informed decisions and maintain clear records.

Owners Corporations that establish practical communication protocols are more likely to resolve issues efficiently, reduce conflict and support productive working relationships.

Key principles

Owners Corporations should:

- establish clear communication pathways
- define decision-making authority
- understand the different roles of Committees, Strata Managers, Building Managers and professional advisers
- obtain independent advice where appropriate
- document significant decisions and supporting information
- maintain respectful communication standards
- support workplace health and safety
- review communication protocols regularly

At-a-glance checklist

Well-managed communication arrangements generally include:

- clearly defined responsibilities
- realistic response expectations
- appropriate escalation pathways
- respectful communication standards

- evidence-based decision-making
- transparent procurement processes
- comprehensive record keeping
- protection of confidential information
- regular review of communication protocols

Final message

Good communication is not simply about responding to emails or answering questions. It is about ensuring that information reaches the right people, decisions are made by those with the appropriate authority, professional advice is obtained when required and actions are properly documented.

As strata communities become more complex and communication demands continue to grow, clear governance structures, defined responsibilities and respectful working relationships become increasingly important.

Owners Corporations that invest in practical communication protocols are better positioned to make informed decisions, reduce conflict, protect the wellbeing of those involved in managing the community and achieve better long-term outcomes for owners and residents.

9. Further Resources

Readers may find the following resources useful when developing communication and governance protocols for their Owners Corporation:

- Owners Corporations Act 2006 (Vic)
- Owners Corporations Regulations 2018 (Vic)
- Consumer Affairs Victoria – Owners Corporations
- WorkSafe Victoria – Guidance on workplace bullying, psychological health and respectful workplaces
- Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) – Owners Corporation disputes
- Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC) – Privacy and information handling guidance
- Strata Community Association (Vic) Code of Ethics

Appendix A – Communication Protocol Checklist

The following checklist may assist an Owners Corporation when reviewing its communication arrangements.

Roles and responsibilities

- ☐ Are communication responsibilities clearly defined?
- ☐ Does everyone understand who makes decisions and who implements them?
- ☐ Are the responsibilities of the Committee, Strata Manager, Building Manager and contractors clearly understood?
- ☐ Is there a nominated Committee contact where appropriate?

Communication processes

- ☐ Are communication channels clearly explained to owners and residents?
- ☐ Are emergency and non-emergency matters managed differently?
- ☐ Are expected response timeframes communicated?
- ☐ Are requests directed to the appropriate person?
- ☐ Are communication expectations realistic?

Governance

- ☐ Are significant decisions supported by appropriate information?
- ☐ Is independent professional advice obtained where required?
- ☐ Are conflicts of interest disclosed?
- ☐ Are procurement decisions documented?
- ☐ Are Committee resolutions properly recorded?

Workplace health and safety

- ☐ Is respectful behaviour expected from all parties?
- ☐ Are workplace health and safety concerns recognised?
- ☐ Are internal escalation procedures documented?
- ☐ Are communication boundaries available where required?

Record keeping

- ☐ Are important communications retained?
- ☐ Are professional reports recorded?
- ☐ Are significant decisions documented?
- ☐ Are instructions to contractors recorded?
- ☐ Are communication protocols reviewed periodically?

Appendix B – Example Communication Protocol

The following example is provided as a general guide only.

Each Owners Corporation should develop communication arrangements appropriate to its size, complexity and management structure.

Communication protocols should remain reasonable, proportionate and consistent with the legal rights and responsibilities of all parties.

Independent legal advice should be considered before introducing significant communication restrictions.

Example Protocol

General enquiries

- Submitted through the nominated communication channel
- One email per issue where practical
- Supporting information included where available

Maintenance requests

- Clearly identify the location
- Describe the issue
- Include photographs where appropriate
- Identify any immediate safety risks

Urgent matters

Urgent matters should be reported immediately using the nominated emergency contact process.

Examples include:

- fire
- significant flooding
- major property damage
- immediate safety hazards
- security incidents

Committee communication

Committee instructions should generally be coordinated through the nominated Committee representative or other agreed process.

Individual Committee members should avoid issuing separate instructions outside agreed authority.

Contractor communication

Instructions to contractors should generally be issued only by authorised persons.

Contractors should avoid accepting conflicting instructions from multiple parties without clarification.

Appendix C – Example Communication Management Process

Where communication becomes excessive, repetitive or unreasonable, the Owners Corporation may adopt a staged response.

The following example should be adapted to suit the particular circumstances.

Stage 1 – Clarify expectations

- explain the agreed communication process
- identify the appropriate communication channel
- provide expected response timeframes

Stage 2 – Written reminder

If the conduct continues:

- explain the concern
- outline expected behaviour
- explain future communication arrangements

Stage 3 – Structured communication

Where appropriate, communication may be managed by:

- one nominated email address
- one consolidated response
- one agreed communication channel
- clearly identified urgent matters

Stage 4 – Review

Communication arrangements should be reviewed periodically to determine whether restrictions remain necessary.

Access should always remain available for:

- emergencies
- health and safety issues
- statutory notices
- legitimate governance matters

Appendix D – Example Respectful Communication Notice

The following wording may assist where communication standards have deteriorated.

Example

The Owners Corporation is committed to maintaining respectful, constructive and professional communication.

Recent correspondence has included language and conduct that is inconsistent with these expectations.

We ask that future communication:

- remains respectful
- focuses on the issue rather than individuals
- avoids abusive, threatening or intimidating language
- follows the agreed communication process

This request is intended to support productive communication and the wellbeing of everyone involved in managing the Owners Corporation.

Where communication continues to present health, safety or governance concerns, the Owners Corporation may consider additional communication management measures after obtaining appropriate advice.