



Levelling up your strata

Best practice strata painting strategies and principles in the new normal


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So you have a
vision.
But where to start?



You're not alone. So how to embrace the challenges in 2022 and implement strategies that will enable you to plan for the future, and thrive, maintenance-wise, even in the new-normal.

In this special Future of Strata e-guide, we share insights to help you answer some of the most currently asked questions around:

- How to adapt to life with COVID and best prepare your strata
- The best approach when wanting to reduce maintenance spend
- What exactly should we maintain?
- How to choose the best partner for maintenance

Thriving in the New Normal: Effective COVID-19 Strategies for Painting and Maintenance

So COVID-19 seems to be here to stay. How can strata managers adapt as we learn to live with COVID-19? And how can we effectively manage its related challenges with regards to maintenance?

Any implementation of painting or maintenance going forward must provide strata managers with a framework for support, flexibility and long-term sustainability.

Even when restrictions ease, and recovery seems underway, snap lockdowns in Australia reinforce an unpredictable future the way painting is carried out while on-site will change to incorporate on-going physical distancing, health and safety procedures, protocols and requirements.

Providers must clearly outline the

COVID-safe manner which works will be performed to give strata managers and their customers peace of mind. Seek to obtain written plans, such as a clearly outlined Pandemic and Safety Management Plan, which have been written to address COVID-19. Ensure these are kept current, and assess them in conjunction with the provider's health and safety framework.

Understandably, there will be some uncertainty and nervousness associated with COVID-19. Providers like Programmed are respectful of concerns, particularly that of residents' and work

collaboratively with strata managers, giving them the flexibility to tailor maintenance to their preferred approach and ensuring maintenance continues to be relevant to current circumstances.

Work with the painting provider to continually review maintenance plans, routinely reassess any long term programmes to ensure they stay competitive, affordable and aligned with changes in the market or customer needs. A provider who looks to support you and your customers should you experience difficulties as a result of this environment, or who, for example are able to help implement appropriate payment programs, is a partner worth retaining.





What's the best approach if wanting to reduce maintenance spend? How can maintenance continue in such situations?

Rather than cut costs and cancel maintenance – as this has a long-term impact and expense if maintenance or any planned work is not carried out – strata managers can help strata schemes find flexible and affordable means of implementing maintenance.

Programmed has seen many strata managers realise success by adopting a planned approach towards long term maintenance. They combine a building audit to identify and prioritise work, outline on-going maintenance initiatives in the form of an instituted 3, 5, or even 7- year painting maintenance programme

to keep buildings in good condition, and conduct regular inspections to proactively address issues before they become expensive problems needing extensive repair and replacement. This proper coordination of works means all required maintenance is addressed in due course.

The longer painting or maintenance work is postponed, often, the more costly it becomes. Putting off such maintenance presents greater risk potentially; especially with people likely to spend more time in their facilities with increased flexible work arrangements. In instances of unaddressed safety requirements, this

could result in injury, leading to far greater losses in terms of reputation, goodwill and property values.

Consistent maintenance, when done well, generally ensures buildings remain safe and in good condition which in turn supports an extension of the asset's lifespan and the resale value. Without maintenance and less investment, strata owners may face ongoing reduced rental yields and owner occupiers significantly impacted returns on investment over time.

How else can strata managers ensure successful strata maintenance?

Astute strata managers understand the importance of partnering with reliable painting maintenance providers. They carefully select providers who can assure them of the capability to see the job through, whether that be a one-off job or a long-term maintenance contract. Quality of work is important, and a proven track record of delivery equally critical.

If there is an economic downturn associated with COVID-19, strata managers must be especially vigilant. It is common – and unfortunate – to encounter some providers who will cut corners in difficult times.

So, strata's and managers should make

certain their specifications for works clearly outline in detail what is included and excluded from scope of works.

Strata managers also want to ensure their effective return to business post-COVID-19. In addition to their responsibilities to their strata schemes, they have an overarching focus on business growth, acquiring new customers and retaining existing ones. To be free to do this with confidence, strata managers can partner with reliable and trusted providers able to deliver essential services – such as painting maintenance - on their behalf.



Painting and Strata Maintenance

This extract of *Inside Strata's* interview with Programmed Property Services' (Programmed) Executive General Manager, Terri Hosking, discusses what aspects of a strata need maintaining and why it's important to compare 'apples to apples' when engaging contractors for painting maintenance work in strata complexes. Programmed also delved into the importance of preventative maintenance plans and their long-term affordability. The ability to maintain site presentation without undue financial pressure is both useful and beneficial, especially within the current environment.





What are the most common things that require maintenance in a strata complex?

The reality is that nothing shouldn't be maintained. When you let something deteriorate, it ends up costing more.

It's just like servicing your car because you know that you're going to prolong the life of your engine. Whilst maintaining the whole strata complex may increase annual expenditure, it decreases levies needing to be raised, which should be reserved for major works.

By taking a preventative, rather than reactive, approach, it's much more cost-effective in the long run.

Therefore, it's important every single aspect of a strata complex is maintained regularly. Most strata managers have a maintenance plan and should allocate funds every year from the budget to maintenance, so they won't have to raise additional levies.

How can strata managers be confident they will be getting the most out of the contractor they choose in terms of value?

They should look at what's relevant to the individual project and Owners Corporation.

A quote for a large project may be cheaper from a two-man company but with a long eight-week delivery timeframe. Meanwhile, a larger company is offering faster, and possibly safer, delivery for the same project.

Consider what's more critical – price or the benefits of the work being completed more quickly with less inconvenience to residents.

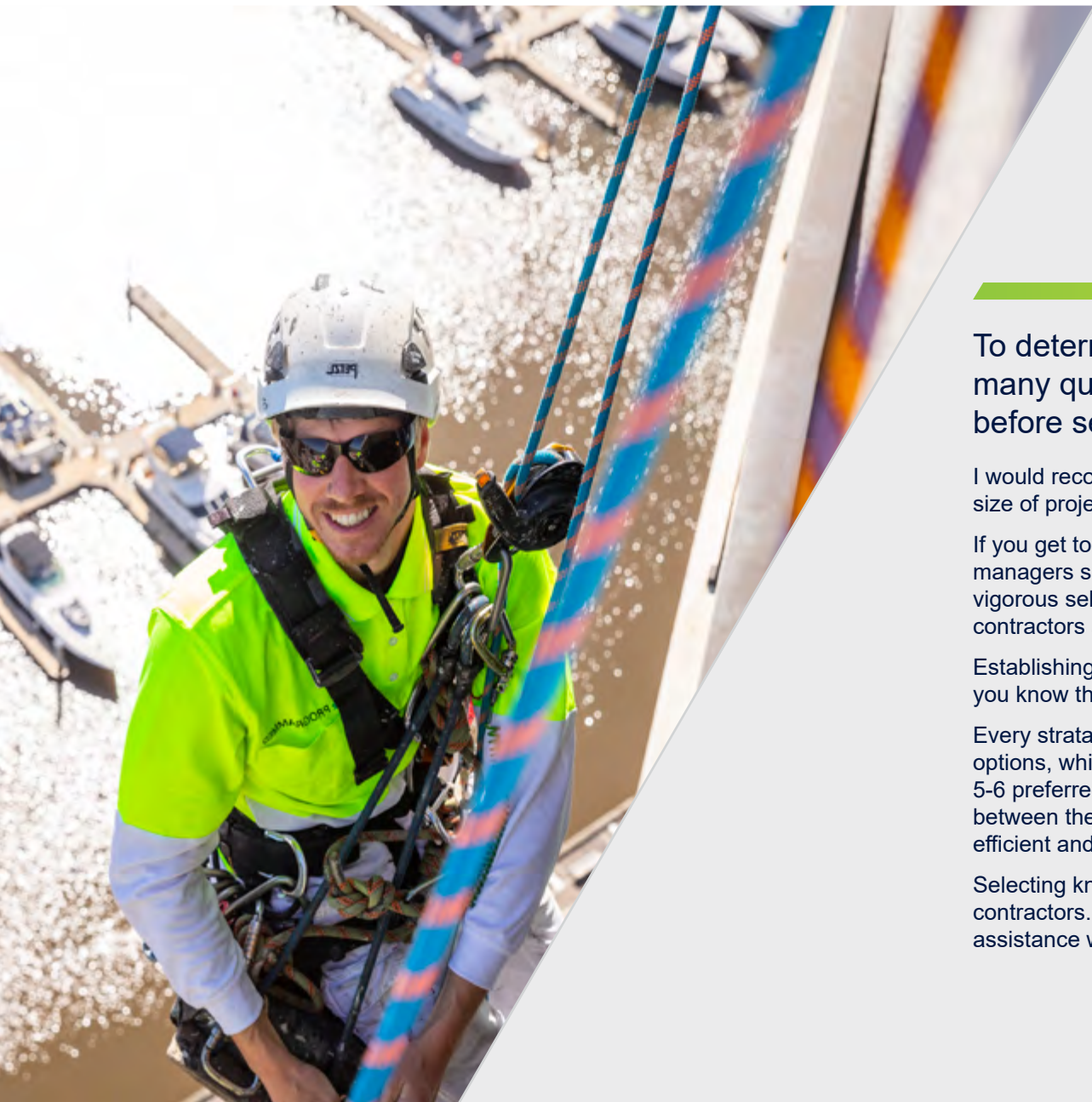
Expertise and experience also delivers value. Experienced professionals can often specify a safer and better way of achieving the same objective, and with better outcomes too.

The painting provider should also actively engage the strata manager and Owners Corporation when on-site; providing proactive updates plus regular weekly meetings.

Their willingness to manage and coordinate with other tradespeople who may be on-site so work doesn't clash without the Owners Corporation or strata managers having to get involved is an aspect of important value add.



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To determine the best value and quality of workmanship, how many quotes do you recommend strata managers source before selecting a contractor?

I would recommend strata managers source between 2-3 quotes for any size of project.

If you get too many quotes, it can make the process quite challenging. Strata managers should compile a list of preferred contractors for all trades and go through a vigorous selection process to develop the list; that way, you're assured of good quality contractors and continuity.

Establishing the working relationship and trust also means, if anything goes wrong, you know they'll remedy it.

Every strata manager has their own preferred contractors, some with upwards of 100 options, which makes it nearly impossible to get proper quotes. We suggest having 5-6 preferred contractors for each trade and inviting 2-3 to quote for each job. Rotating between the 5-6 contractors based on job size and workforce required results in more efficient and better outcomes.

Selecting known, reliable, reputable contractors upfront is important. reliable, rusted contractors. These trusted relationships allow you to go back to contractors for assistance with concerns.

When evaluating these quotes for maintenance, how can strata managers ensure they're comparing 'apples to apples'?

When comparing 'apples to apples', firstly check the scope of work to ensure the two quotes are the same. In painting, for example, one company may be quoting a higher number of coats than another. Look also for inclusions, exclusions and application methodology.

If details of the methodology are not detailed enough, which can be very common, you won't know what the difference is between the quotes. This clear explanation of the methodology, can have a huge impact on the price.

Therefore, it's important to make sure the scope of work, i.e. what work will occur, and the methodology, which refers to how this work will be accomplished, are both clearly outlined so that proper comparisons can be done.

Methodology around safety is another important consideration. In instances involving working at heights, for example, if certain companies allow tradespeople to work without harnesses versus another company doing things safely with proper harnesses on scaffolds and elevated work platforms – that will greatly influence pricing. So, verifying the approach to safety is crucial.

It's very common for strata managers to presume a contractor is safe simply because they have all their insurances. Having the insurances doesn't translate into being safe when on site. Often, strata managers are unaware that if someone is injured on site, strata managers, as well as the Owner Corporations, have an equal liability, in addition to the company performing the works.





If you are offered a significantly cheaper quote, you may get an inferior service that cuts corners or find out the job was under-quoted midway through the job – neither of these are good outcomes.

Two quotes may be radically different from one another, depending on the companies providing them. What should strata managers look for specifically within a quote so they're comparing the same line items or scope of work?

Look specifically at inclusions and exclusions, the extent of works and make sure the line items include access equipment and permits.

Methodology should be outlined; if not ask that they explain clearly how they'll approach certain areas.

Also, strata managers need to be very wary: If they have three quotes, two are similarly priced and one is significantly cheaper, to be cautious of the cheapest quote.

The difference in pricing would typically be no more than 10%, when aligned to what tradespeople are generally paid and the cost of running those businesses.

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Is it enough for strata managers to take an ‘apples to apples’ approach to comparing two or more quotes to ascertain true value?

An ‘apples to apples’ approach is good for a basic comparison of what will be done and how.

However, it doesn’t ensure whoever is selected will complete the work to a high quality and in a safe manner as it doesn’t take into account previous projects, experience or expertise.

Just as you would ring references when interviewing someone for a job, you also really need to do a reference check. Go, have a look at jobs they’ve completed. Talk to their customers.

A good way to do this too, is to seek permission to turn up to a current project site at your own convenience, anytime, not when they’re expecting it.



How can strata managers continue to ensure the maintenance and presentation of stratas in these times?
What options exist in terms of accessibility and affordability?

To make maintenance easy for strata complexes, Programmed offers tailored preventative maintenance programmes that have long-term affordability. These long-term arrangements are applicable across all of Programmed's painting and maintenance services.

Even if major upgrading works need to be done upfront, flexible payment options allow costs to be amortised over the term of the maintenance agreement.

This ensures the greatest aesthetic impact on the property occurs as quickly as possible without emptying the reserve fund.

Don't wait for a post-COVID to upgrade or tackle your painting and maintenance requirements. Avoid incurring potentially more expenses due to general increases in costs and further deterioration of unmaintained assets.

If financial reasons and uncertainty are holding your strata back, Programmed's flexible payment options and long term preventative maintenance plans are choice considerations, benefiting you through:

- Predictable spend allowing you to remove surprises in budget and forecast.
- Freed up cashflow. Works can be done without putting financial pressure on the strata, special levies can be avoided and the health of the reserve fund maintained.



About Programmed

Programmed Property Services specialises in painting and preventative maintenance solutions. We have specialist teams able to provide solutions tailored to the needs of our customers, a core component of which are organisations within the strata industry sector. These services include painting, signage, grounds, landscaping, building and minor civil works projects as well as general maintenance and electrical works. Established in 1951, we have experience that accompanies a long history of successful contract delivery.

We offer you the assurance and strength of a national footprint with strong local expertise and proven ability. Our quality, innovative and safe solutions give you confidence in our ability to partner with you to enhance your property.

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