

Squatters Run Newsletter



Welcome to winter 2014

Despite a late start to the season, winter 2014 has now arrived with heavy snow falling from 24 June. The Squatters Council wish owners an enjoyable and prosperous ski season.

Levy increases

Council decided after its annual budgetary deliberations that levies for the coming year should be increased by 10%. Council was mindful that this was greater than a CPI increase, but is hopeful that the levy increase will be restoring the Association's income to a level which will be adequate in the longer term and avoid the need for special levies.

At the 2010 AGM, it was decided that levies would increase by CPI each year, but the following year this policy was dropped because of the pressures caused by the GFC and the concerns expressed by a small number of owners and by KT's commercial tenants. Unfortunately this has had a significant impact on our ability to maintain aging buildings in a harsh environment, creating a situation which needed ultimately to be redressed. Owners have previously been provided copies of the maintenance program prepared for us by an external consultant (further copies of which can be obtained from Alpine Strata), and should now be aware of the significant challenges facing us in maintaining the building to an acceptable standard. The current size of our sinking fund is clearly inadequate for the work which will need to be scheduled over the coming few years. Any queries concerning the Association's budget can be addressed to Alpine Strata who will pass them on to the Treasurer.

Foxtel connections and 'the Bluebox'

Now that more than 50% of apartments have connected to Foxtel using the bluebox infrastructure, Council considers that its decision on this controversial issue has been clearly vindicated, despite the noisy opposition from a small number of owners. Had Council not acted as it did, the alternative would have been that a much smaller number of apartments would have connected to Foxtel at a far higher cost and with a plethora of new cabling installations throughout our buildings, at considerable cost to the Squatters reputation for quality accommodation in Thredbo.

Those apartments that are now connected are better able to compete with other premises in the village.

Summer and the bike season

KT and NPWS have worked hard over the last couple of years to expand mountain biking in Thredbo with the development of the second downhill Flow trail and the multi purpose trail to Lake Crackenback. NPWS is currently considering amendments to the Plan of Management to further facilitate mountain biking in the Park.

Mountain biking and to some extent, road cycling are the growth factors for visitation in alpine areas all round the world. Whistler BC is reputed to earn more revenue from summer visitation than results from winter visitation. (Higher costs in winter).

We have already seen that Thredbo is increasingly becoming a summer resort with high usage by mountain bike riders. Squatters owners are increasingly being queried about facilities for bike storage and maintenance. Without these facilities we will ultimately lose guests to other providers. Outdoor storage is not an option with many road and mountain bikes costing in the vicinity of \$8000!

Over the winter, Council will consider costs and options further, but one proposal under consideration is to convert one of the areas currently used for ski/boot storage in winter into a bike storage area in summer (reverting to its traditional use each winter), and providing a permanent hose 'wash station' in the garage area. Owners having views on this issue may wish to make them known to the Council through Alpine Strata.

We do not have a "Do Nothing" option as we really don't want muddy bikes being tracked through common areas and stored in apartments, and we don't want guests going elsewhere where facilities are available!

By-laws and consideration for other owners

A Squatters owner has recently left the following 'warning' in their boot locker, following a decision made after the long weekend last October to turn off the drying room heating. [Council considered that heating common areas during the summer period was a costly exercise providing little benefit to owners or their guests, but indicated that Council members

were authorised to turn the heating back on during any extended rainy periods].



Notices such as these are in breach of the Association's bylaws, which state +

" 10.2 No member shall erect, hang, display or otherwise put up any sign, advertisement, billboard, hoarding or notice in or on the Common Property or without prior written consent of the Association."

Owners are requested to be mindful of the potential impact of their actions on other owners and their guests and to kindly refrain from such actions. Ultimately, owners should appreciate that council takes no pleasure in being required to act in relation to any continuing breaches of the Association's by-laws.

Cleaning and maintenance matters

During the summer period, a sewage blockage in Stage 1 caused an overflow of sewage resulting in substantial damage. The damage was sufficiently significant to result in an insurance claim by the Association, but all problems relating to the matter have now been rectified to the satisfaction of Council with the bulk of the costs being covered by insurance.

Council maintains a contract for cleaning of common areas and which is reviewed and put out to tender every 2 – 3 years. Council is considering whether to address maintenance problems which occurred during the summer season with a similar form of arrangement. It is also intended that its managing agency arrangements with Alpine Strata will be similarly reviewed and put to tender in due course, to ensure that our most costly arrangements are cost effective for owners and provide best outcomes.

Heated Driveway

During the recent snowfalls, owners queried whether the heated driveway into the garage had been turned on or whether it was operating correctly {The answer was yes on both counts, but a number of heated driveways in the village, and the heating for the village stairs, were unable to fully cope with the continuing heavy snow}. Responsibility for turning on the

heated driveway lies with our cleaning contractor, but as a matter of common sense, any owner / property manager can turn on the heating whenever it starts to snow, rather than contacting Alpine Strata and having to wait for messages to be conveyed so that someone else can turn it on. The padlock on the switch (adjacent to the garage door) is not locked and is there for cosmetic purposes, to prevent people thinking the heating switch opens the garage door. The switch has a 12 hour timer, so that the body corporate will not face heavy electricity bills due to someone turning the heating on and forgetting to turn it off (as happened on previous occasions before the current switching arrangement was installed). Hopefully this season will be a good one, and turning on the driveway heating for snowfalls will be a regular occurrence!

Feedback

While Council appreciates that some of its actions will on occasion be criticised by various owners, it should be remembered by owners that all Council members serve in a voluntary capacity and seek to represent and balance the disparate interests of the different classes of owners who comprise the Association. This is often difficult and invariably time-consuming.

Comments and suggestions from owners are welcome and should be provided in the first instance to Alpine Strata at alpinestrata@bigpond.com

Squatters Run Council