



Amendment Bill 2016

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Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
Parliament House  
Brisbane Qld 4000

VIA EMAIL: [lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Research Director

**RE: ENQUIRY INTO FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (DOMESTIC SMOKE ALARMS)**

Strata Community Australia (Qld) (SCA (Qld)) thanks the Committee for inviting comments to the Fire and Emergency Services (Domestic Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2016.

SCA (Qld) is a non-profit, professional organisation for bodies corporate, body corporate managers and suppliers of services to the body corporate industry in Queensland. SCA (Qld), through its predecessor CTIQ, was established in 1984 and currently has more than 600 members. SCA (Qld) members administer around 65% of all strata titled properties in Queensland and up to 90% of all managed properties.

The core objectives of SCA (Qld) include:

- representation on body corporate and community title issues to Government;
- educating the general community on strata management and lifting the profile of the profession;
- provision of on-going professional educational development to its members;
- facilitating relationships between members, government, sponsors and suppliers of services; and
- the establishment and maintenance of professional standards of practice for SCA (Qld) members.

SCA (Qld) works closely with the Office of the Body Corporate Commissioner and has a well established relationship with the Attorney General in regards to body corporate matters. The nature of our organisation enables us to assist in advising on strata community title living.

**BACKGROUND**

SCA (Qld) is of the understanding that the legislation amendments are a result, amongst others, of the Slacks Creek tragedy that occurred in 2011. The State Coroner recommended that legislative amendments be made to mandate the installation of photoelectric and interconnected smoke alarms in every bedroom, between areas containing bedrooms, in any hallway servicing bedrooms and in any other storey of an older residential building. It was also recommended that for new residences, the smoke alarms be hardwired and for old residences, that the alarms are either hardwired or powered by a 10 year lithium battery.

**SCA (QLD) SUPPORT FOR THE BILL**

Evidence suggests that ionisation smoke alarms are not as effective at detecting slow-smouldering fires, which tend to be the fires that lead to the most casualties at homes. Photoelectric alarms 'see' the smoke by detecting visible particles of combustion. They are also more reliable and less likely to produce false alarm activations. When a photoelectric alarm is triggered, the smoke is still at the top layer of the ceiling, giving residents more time to evacuate safely.

It is proposed that private dwellings are required to comply within 10 years from commencement. Additionally, after five years from commencement all dwellings, that are sold or leased will need to comply at the time an accommodation agreement or contract or sale is entered into. Currently,

the only jurisdiction with photoelectric laws in place is the Northern Territory. If the Bill proceeds, it is very likely that other jurisdictions will follow suit. Therefore the implementation of the legislative amendments is critical to a greater fire safety in Australia, and more particularly Queensland.

The Coroners findings of recent fires having been a result of a lack of smoke alarms, or fire and smoke alarms failing which subsequently have caused deaths and serious loss of property, are worrisome as they often occur in multiple dwelling schemes. SCA (Qld) members have experienced the devastating effects of strata community fires and apart from the human injury aspect, the administrative consequences that follow have been widespread. The financial loss to strata communities and the logistical activities involved in the schemes' rebuild are difficult and costly to the owners.

The proposed public awareness campaign is integral to the education of owners in bodies corporate lots as all related industry services providers such as body corporate (strata) managers, real estate agents and resident managers. SCA (Qld) offers support in the distribution of appropriate information and marketing material as well as education to strata managers. Members are required to obtain Continuing Professional Development points and we very much welcome the opportunity to deliver an information session with QFES upon implementation of the bill.

Compliance and safety are integral to the good management of bodies corporate. On behalf of members, SCA (Qld) fully supports the bill and its intentions and strongly supports the implementation of it.

**CONCLUSION**

Whilst the proposed amendments impose some costs to owners and some inconvenience to residents, SCA (Qld) believes that these changes are necessary for the protection of people from house fires. Residents have 10 years to comply with these changes, which seems a reasonable timeframe for change in body corporate and community titles. The proposed amendments will achieve a positive outcome which SCA (Qld) wholeheartedly supports.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

SCA (Qld) is happy to send a representative to discuss this submission and the proposed reforms with an appropriate Committee representative. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Sincerely

[REDACTED]

Simon Barnard  
President