

Headline: **Strata Disputes**

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Disputes in a strata corporation are inevitable. People with different attitudes and ways of life are bound randomly together as owners of lots in the same strata corporation, and people living in close contact with one another and owning property together will inevitably have disagreements.

Strata councils will often become involved in those disputes. For example, implementing or enforcing a rule or bylaw can often lead to dissention, or a strata council can be drawn into a dispute between two or more owners. Unfortunately, disputes are part of strata ownership and strata living, but their effect can be minimized if they are settled quickly. It is often difficult for owners or strata council to know what to do when a dispute arises. Of course, every dispute is different, but here are some guidelines that may help both owners and strata council members:

1. **Prevent the dispute from escalating or festering:** This means dealing directly with the dispute. Don't gossip about the dispute to others and don't involve more people in the dispute than are already involved. Resist the temptation to form camps of allies in the dispute.
2. **Exclude the personality and focus on the problem.** It's a fact of life that some people are easier to get along with than others, but don't let a person's personality prevent you from understanding the issues from that person's perspective. One person may be very upset with something that would have no effect on another. Resolving a dispute requires an understanding of the problem from the other person's perspective, and it can be more difficult to understand that problem when a person has a strong, aggressive or otherwise difficult personality. Understanding the problem can often lead to creative resolution of it.
3. **Act:** Very few disputes or disagreements simply "go away" despite our wishing them to. If the dispute is between you and another person, try to arrange a mutually convenient time to discuss the problem. If the strata council receives a letter of complaint, deal with it as soon as possible. Investigate it thoroughly and find out all sides of the dispute.
4. **Communicate:** When discussing the problem, pay as much attention to understanding the other person as you do trying to get the other person to understand you, and try not to be defensive. It's only natural to want to defend your point of view, and it's common to want to react strongly when someone differs with your point of view. Ask questions openly and stay curious about the answers. Without open listening, there is no communication. A two way radio doesn't communicate very well if both radios are set on "transmit" and neither on "receive".
5. **Get an Expert involved:** If your efforts at trying to resolve the dispute yourself are unsuccessful, get an expert involved. Depending on the nature of the dispute, this could be a lawyer, arbitrator or a mediator.

In summary, **Prevent the dispute from escalating, Exclude personalities, Act, Communicate, and get an Expert involved: PEACE.**