

What's the research problem we're trying to solve?

APRIL 2019

Australia is now a world leader in the pace and extent of its urban revolution, with record numbers of apartments being built across our capital cities. Sydney is at the forefront of this change, and is now building more units than standalone houses. This trend is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, as facilitating strata development remains high on the agenda of both state and federal policymakers.

But this revolution has not been without its problems. Public perceptions of apartment living are mixed, and much of the concern relates to issues with build quality. This is no minor issue, as various major reports have made clear. It is also gaining increasing media and political attention, particularly in the aftermath of the disastrous tower fires in London and Melbourne, as well as the failure of major structural components, and severe waterproofing problems.

Despite these problems, there is no comprehensive data available on defective apartment buildings in NSW: we don't know how many buildings are affected, what kinds of defects exist, or why they've occurred. Previous City Futures research found 72-85% of owners corporations had identified major defects in their buildings, and this remains one of the only quantitative assessments in Australia. That research focused on the management of defects, however, rather than causes. We now have a team of industry partners supporting a new research project to address this knowledge gap. The project will:

- identify and quantify defects in strata in NSW;
- examine **the cause of these quality issues**, and
- **propose innovative solutions**.

About our industry research partners

The issue of defects in strata is of **significant concern to the strata industry**, given the risks if public or political sentiment turns against apartment living. Dealing with defects is also a critical matter for urban planners in making cities more sustainable, liveable, resilient and productive. Reflecting this concern, this research project is a collaboration with key strata industry organisations:

- Strata Community Australia (NSW)
- Strata Community Insurance
- Australian College of Strata Lawyers
- Lannock Strata Finance
- Ross Taylor & Associates
- Owners Corporation Network of Australia



Background to the research

Since 2006, City Futures has worked with strata industry stakeholders to develop and fulfil a comprehensive strata research agenda. Together this group has produced cutting-edge work examining a range of issues in strata, including governance, management, value, investment, resident demographics and the experience of living in strata. Some past major projects include:

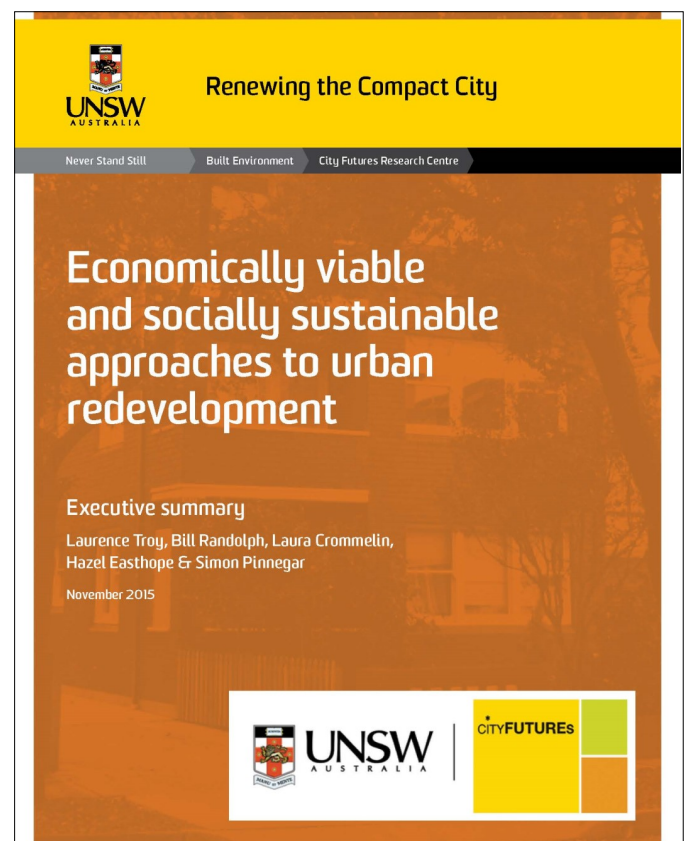
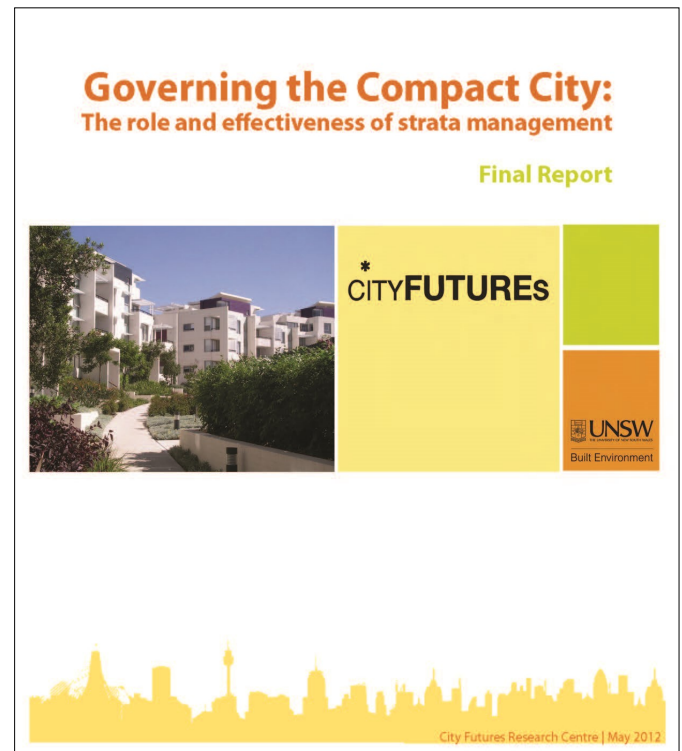
- The demand for higher density housing in Sydney and Melbourne (ARC)
- Urban consolidation and the social sustainability of cities (ARC)
- Governing the Compact City (ARC)
- Managing Major Repairs in the Residential Strata Sector (NSW Fair Trading)
- Renewing the Compact City (ARC)
- The Accessibility Needs and Challenges of Strata Residents (Leichhardt Council)
- Living Well in Greater Density (Shelter NSW)

In the process, the research has helped to raise the profile of the strata sector, and reveal the challenges and benefits of strata living. This is a noteworthy achievement, particularly over a period where the number of Australians living, working and investing in strata has continued to grow rapidly. This innovative process for generating award-winning research with direct policy and practice relevance has become an exemplar of collaboration across the strata sector.

After extensive discussions with industry stakeholders in 2016, defects in strata emerged as the number one priority for the next tranche of strata research. We are delighted that many of our partners on previous projects have again joined this new Linkage project, including Strata Community Australia (NSW), the Owners Corporation Network of Australia, and the Australian College of Strata Lawyers.

About the ARC Linkage Grant Program

The *ARC Linkage Projects* scheme works to benefit the broader Australian community by funding collaborative research projects between the University and industry, government or community organisations. The scheme is designed to support projects that are of strategic value to end-users and will help advance the development of innovative solutions to current problems.



About our team

Professor Bill Randolph and Dr Hazel Easthope have led the Consortium's two previous ARC Linkage projects, and will lead this project with support from an impressive research team.

Bill Randolph, Professor of Urban Planning and Director, City Futures Research Centre

Professor Bill Randolph has led City Futures since August 2004, overseeing a team specialising in housing policy, urban development and metropolitan planning policy issues. Bill has 30 years experience as a housing and urban policy researcher in the academic, government, non-government and private sectors.



Hazel Easthope, Associate Professor and UNSW Scientia Fellow

Dr Hazel Easthope holds a prestigious Australian Research Council Future Fellowship and a UNSW Scientia Fellowship, supporting her research on the unique challenges of apartment living and strata title ownership, management and governance. Since joining City Futures in 2007, she has undertaken research examining private rental housing, home ownership, social housing, residential satisfaction and the meaning of home.



Martin Loosemore, Professor of Construction Management

Martin is a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Building. His research has received numerous international awards, and he has held 7 Australian Research Council Grants. He has published over 200 scholarly books and refereed articles in risk management, innovation, social enterprise, social procurement, corporate social responsibility and human resource management.



Laura Crommelin, Research Lecturer

Laura joined City Futures in 2015, and has spent the past three years working on research projects examining urban planning, urban renewal and housing affordability issues in Sydney. Laura was a member of the award-winning Renewing the Compact City project team, and recently completed a project examining the influence of Airbnb on high density living and housing affordability.



City Futures Research Centre is a national leader in scholarly applied urban research, based in the Faculty of Built Environment at UNSW. We collaborate with academic researchers across Australia, Asia and Europe, and have strong partnerships with local, state and federal government agencies, as well as industry stakeholders and community groups. Find out more at <https://cityfutures.be.unsw.edu.au>