



Initial Maintenance Schedules: Raising the Bar for Strata Handovers

College Chronicle
Newsletter

March 27, 2026



RTO 91513



Initial Maintenance Schedules: Raising the Bar for Strata Handovers

The handover of a strata building from a developer to the new owners is a pivotal moment, and one that can determine if a scheme runs smoothly moving forward. A crucial part of the handover is the **Initial Maintenance Schedule (IMS)**. From 1 April 2026, the next set of changes to the NSW strata laws will commence. These changes include strengthening developers' accountability of new strata buildings.

What is changing for developers?

Developers will be required to provide an independently certified Initial Maintenance Schedule (IMS) and first-year levy estimates to the Owners Corporation at least 14 days before the First Annual General Meeting (AGM), using a standard form to ensure transparency and better building management for owners. A qualified, independent surveyor must review and certify the IMS and the initial levy estimates. The independent surveyor **must not** be connected with the developer.

They must also be a member of either:

- The Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors with the designation Certified Quantity Surveyor, or
- The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors who is a Chartered Quantity Surveyor.

The updated requirements for initial maintenance schedules are also mirrored in community land laws to strengthen developer accountability for new community land schemes.

Substantial penalties apply for non-compliance.

Why this matters?

The IMS offers new owners' greater confidence that the initial expenses, maintenance strategies, and projected strata levies are accurate. The IMS may also offer legal safeguards, as it can serve as evidence in disputes to demonstrate whether damage or defect could have been prevented.



Next steps for strata managing agents

Notify the developers you work with regarding the changes and collaborate with them to produce clear and usable Initial Maintenance Schedule documents for initial budgets and levy calculations. Avoid low initial levies, as short-term savings can frequently result in long-term issues. Make sure that the Initial Maintenance Schedule is incorporated in the notices for the First AGM of the strata scheme. Additionally, your strata management agency may also wish to refer developers to NSW Fair Trading's website for information about the requirements starting on 1 April 2026.

Strata managing agents should also be aware of other changes starting on 1 April 2026. These include:

- the new standard form for a 10-year capital works fund plan. This must be used if a strata scheme is due to create their first plan or renew their

10-year plan. The digitised Capital works fund planner can also be used for a strata scheme to meet this requirement.

- updated strata information certificates. NSW Fair Trading will email strata managing agents once the updated form for strata information certificates (Section 184 Certificates) is available on the website. This change is also mirrored in community land laws.

The newly implemented measures are designed to enhance the quality of strata living, mitigate building decay caused by insufficient maintenance by mandating maintenance requirements, particularly for new developments, and ensure stricter compliance by developers with the Initial Maintenance Schedule, thus safeguarding new owners from unforeseen and unanticipated costs.

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