

The price of doing nothing

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It's often said that the problem with most executive committees is that the people you'd like to be running them are too busy earning money to pay their mortgages to do so.

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And it's too easy to joke about committee members who either have a specific selfish agenda, are compensating for a missing social life or are among the one in 50 owners who are permanently angry about something. Anything. Everything.

But seriously, there are thousands of people out there who make a purely voluntary effort and whose only recognition from their neighbours is when they are criticised for doing something wrong (i.e. something an owner didn't like).

These are the ones who contact the tradespeople when something needs fixing, collect and bank the levies, pay the bills, get in between warring neighbours to keep the peace, liaise with strata managers - or save you from paying for one - and generally allow everyone else to live their lives in blissful ignorance.

But every so often they think, why am I doing this? A recent posting to the Flat Chat forum asked: "What happens if one member feels strongly that they do all the work and would like to be paid? Is this a matter submitted to be an agenda item in a meeting and all owners would decide and vote? Or is this something that is not possible?"

It's possible, for sure, but you can't pay office-bearers a wage. However you can award a gratuity in retrospect at an AGM for work done the previous year.

Chris Kerin of Teys Lawyers adds: "There is no guidance as to how much is appropriate. However ... the amount of remuneration could be similar to that received by a strata manager for the provision of similar services."

To properly focus your neighbours' minds, I would have two motions at your next AGM - one to award a reasonable payment for work done and then the other, should the first one fail, to employ someone to do the work at commercial rates. Sorted!

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