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## Supporting Strata Managers During Covid-19

### Overview

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has now become a global crisis, affecting the lives of many. With most Strata offices now closed and some of your owners struggling with loss of jobs and reduced income, it may be time to make some changes in your everyday processes.

This article has been prepared to assist you to deal with some of the issues and processes that you may need to undertake during this time.

This document will cover the following:

- [Accessing Strata Master remotely](#)
- [Owner & Committee Member Portals](#)
- [Communication Tools](#)
  - [Bulk SMS Communication](#)
  - [Bulk Email Communication](#)
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  - [Outsourced Printing Services - Bing Mailroom](#)
- [Electronic voting for meetings](#)
- [Financial Assistance](#)

- [Changes to debt recovery fees](#)
  - [Payment Plans](#)
  - [Changes to Interest Accrual](#)
  - [Cancelling Levies](#)
- [Reminders for Principals](#)

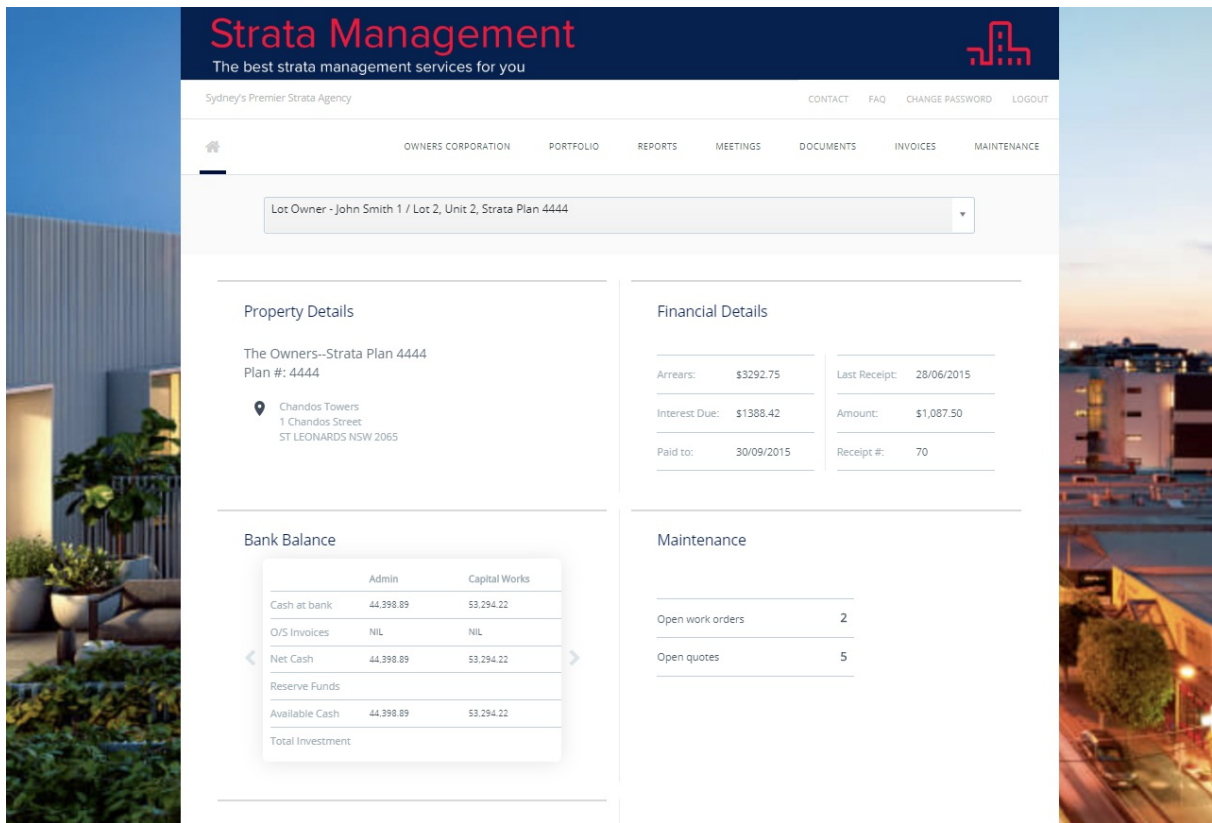
## Accessing Strata Master remotely

If you're having trouble getting into Strata Master from home, then it's time to look at your options. You can speak to an IT prover like [ChillIT](#) about remote hosting, or you can look to [access your office PC from home](#) using software like TeamViewer.

## Owner & Committee Member Portal

Now, more than ever, communication and transparency with your owners corporations is crucial.

The Owner & Committee Member Portals have a modern, refreshed design, with more branding and customisation options for your agency.



Utilise this service to provide your owners important and up to date information 24/7 at no extra cost to your business.

On the portal, Owners and Committee Members can:

- View contact details for their properties, including any agent and tenant details
- View their distribution method for levies, meetings and correspondence
- View their levy paid to dates
- View the general financial details for their properties
- Generate financial reports, including their current owner account
- View meetings
- Conduct pre-meeting electronic voting for general meetings
- View documents & Invoices (File Smart required)

- View Repairs and Maintenance

Providing access for your owners will decrease the number of calls and emails coming into your office by allowing owners to self-serve information they would usually request from their Strata Manager.

Customisation is key for the portal, you can choose to show some information, but not all. You can also customise the financial reports that are available at a corporation level!

More detailed information on the portal, including portal activation and customisation, can be found [here](#).

## Communication Tools

It's important to communicate with your portfolio as much as possible during this challenging time.

Make sure you are utilising all of the tools within Strata Master to make this as easy as possible.

### Bulk SMS Communication

Strata Master Version 12 introduced Rockend Enhanced SMS Integration, allowing single and bulk SMS messages to be sent via an online service.

Rockend Enhanced SMS provides a range of advanced features that will assist in optimising SMS communication with your portfolio:

- You can create SMS templates with a wide range of merge fields on offer
- You can schedule your SMS to be sent at a future date and time. These messages can also be setup as a recurring campaign.
- You can change your Sender ID and reply options per SMS
- Increased message length means you have the freedom to say more when you need to.

Every Enhanced Rockend SMS user (including new users!) will get **200 FREE MESSAGES** through Rockend SMS in April and May.

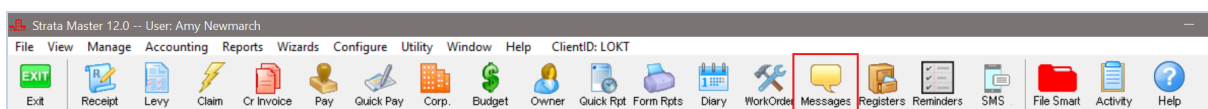
For more detailed information on the SMS integration can be found [here](#)

We also have a [Top Tip](#) for you to watch if you prefer!

## Bulk Email Communication

If you aren't already using it, make sure you take advantage of the Communications Wizard in Strata Master – accessed via the toolbar. This allows you to send bulk emails to the following groups in your portfolio:

- Owners
- Tenants
- Agents
- Residents
- Committee
- Notice Contacts
- Levy Contacts



## Mail Merge

During times like these, you may feel like you are repeating the same information over and over again.

Make your life easier by creating some Mail Merge templates for your agency. This will save all

your staff time, ensure a consistent message is being delivered and, allows personalised communication to your portfolio via both e-mail and post.

More detailed information and Top Tips can be found [here](#)

## Outsourced Printing Services

Although most owners these days prefer correspondence via email, there are still a number of owners who would like to receive notifications via mail, but how do you deal with physical mail when your staff are not in the office with access to the printer?

This is where outsourced printing providers such as [Bing Mail](#) become a necessity for your business to continue its ordinary operations. These services allow your staff to quickly and easily manage physical mail-outs and notices from wherever they are working.

Through the handy integration with Bing Mail in Strata Master, these notifications can easily be sent into your Bing mailing queue and Bing Mail will handle the rest!

Contact Bing Mail for further information <https://www.bingmail.com.au/contact>

## Meetings

Physical meetings may no longer be an option, but you **can** still run meetings!

Pre-meeting electronic voting in Strata Master allows your owners to vote on agenda items prior to the meeting via the Owner & Committee Member portal.

While Rockend encourages every customer to make their own investigations into the requirements of their legislation with regards to online voting, we have also compiled a [list of references](#) and recommendations from experts across Australia and New Zealand to highlight the information relevant to Pre-meeting Electronic Voting for each region.

The following Top tips are also available to you on how to [setup](#), [use](#) and [vote](#).

## Financial Assistance

There is no denying, many of your owners will be dealing with some financial difficulties, as an agency you may want to show some compassion during this difficult time and reduce or remove your fees for debt recovery work, or you may have some buildings that are allowing payment plans, or want interest to stop accruing.

We have put together some suggestions below to assist with the above issues, however we would recommend that you attend the *Managing Owners Arrears* **classroom training** to ensure you have the best understanding of the functionality and process. Better yet, all classroom training is **FREE** until May 31. Use the code WFH100 when registering!

## Debt Recovery Fees

If you have decided to lower or remove the fees that you charge for Debt Recovery during the Covid-19 crisis

Navigate to Configure > Management Fees

Code	Description of Service	Rate	Billing Unit	Auto Billing
PMVOTE	Pre-Meeting Electronic Voting	NIL	notice	
PRTE	Email Levy Notice	0.77	each	
PRTP	Print Levy Notice	0.77	each	
REG	Register By-Laws	NIL	registration	
RPT	Monthly/Quarterly Report Fee	NIL	month	
SCHB	SCHEDULE B Time Charges	NIL	each	
SMS	SMS Charges	0.85	each	
STD	Standard Management Fee	NIL	month	Yes
STG1	Reminder Notice	7.00	each	
STG2	Final Notice	15.00	each	
STG3	Notice of Legal action	75.00	each	
SUBMET	Submetering Admin Fee	10.00	each	
WD	Work order charges	2.50	each	

Read Only			
Code	Description of Service	Rate	Billing unit
STG1	Reminder Notice	7.00	each
Expense	153200	Admin-Legal & Debt Collection Fees - Admin	
<input type="checkbox"/> Include in transaction based fees			
Revenue			

Annual Consumer Price Index (CPI)	
Current rate	0.0 %
Published/period	

Here you can change your billing rate for each stage of Debt Recovery – this will apply the change for your whole portfolio.

If you want to change the fees for a particular corporation only, navigate to the building card and select the management fees button

Strata Scheme 4444 - Read Only Mode

Management Fees button highlighted in red box.

Body corporate name: The Owners Of SP 4444

Plan number: 4444 Building: Chandos Towers

Street number: 1 Street: Chandos Street

Town/Suburb: ST LEONARDS State: NSW Postcode: 2065

## Payment Plans

If an owners corporation has approved a payment plan, don't forget to record the details on the financial tab of the owners corporation.

General

Financial

TFN: 850444555

ABN: 56 003 544 107

Normal levy frequency: Quarterly

Levy discount rate (%): 10

Levy discount grace days: 0

Levy interest rate (%): 10.5

Interest free period: 34 Day

Reserve funds: 0.00

Reject levy receipts:

Charge unpaid interest:

Creditor invoice hold status:

Include sub-meter invoices in Quorum calculation:

Status Certificate

Levy year: 28/09/2019 To: 28/09/2020

Print all attachments for Status Certificates:

Debt Recovery

Exclude all lots from debt recovery:

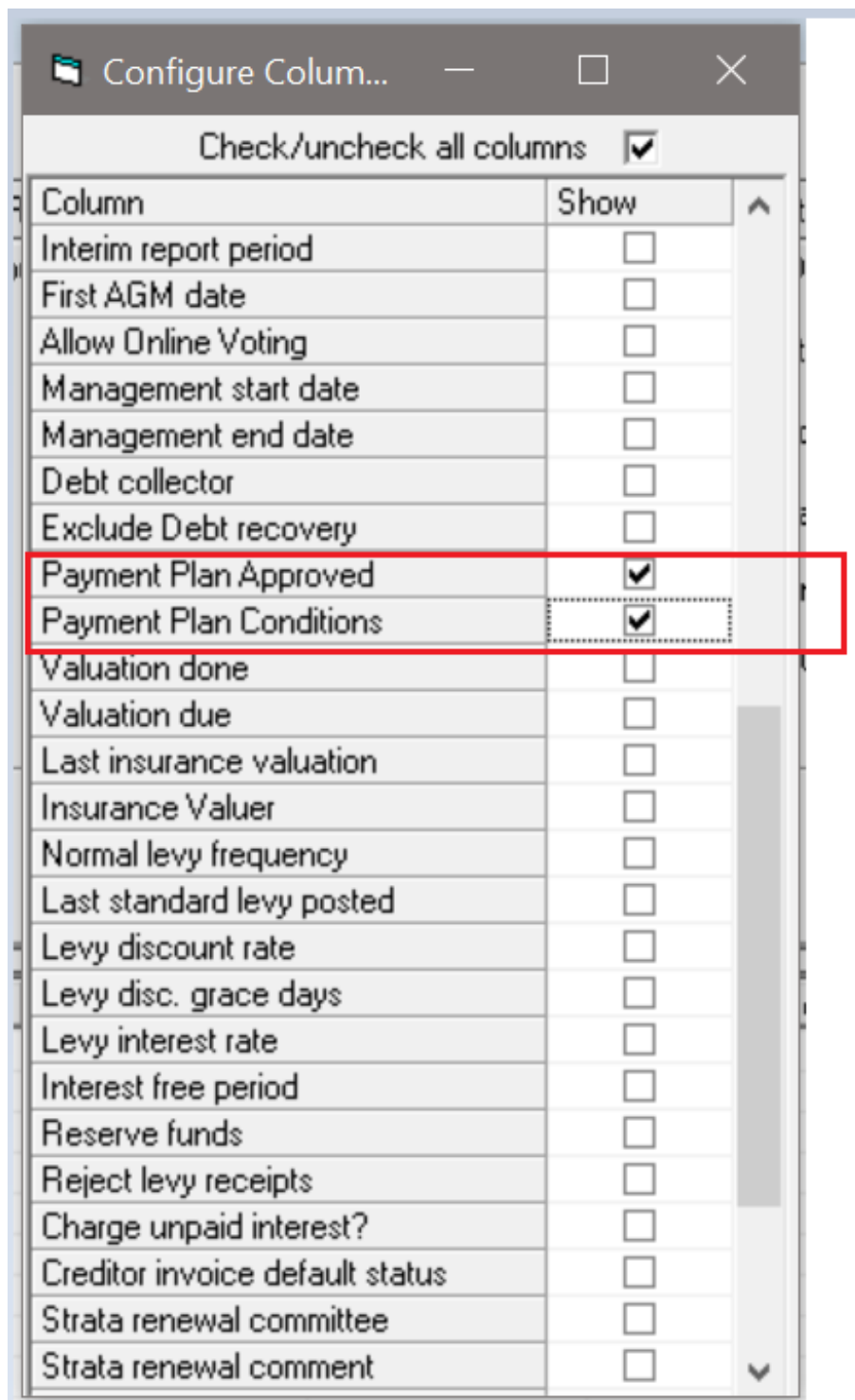
Debt collector acct: Accountant

Payment Plan approved:

Payment Plan conditions:

You can report on your portfolio's payment plans via Quick Reports > Corporations and select the two payment plan options from the configuration column menu.





You can also record the payment plan details at the lot level via the Debt Recovery tab to ensure they don't get included in your Debt Recovery process.

Lot Owner - Janelle Ashley Barton / Lot 3, Unit 3, Strata Scheme 4444 - Edit Mode

EXIT [Icons]

General Agent/Tenant/Leases Levies Notices Mortgages **Debt Recovery**

Status: **Currently in debt recovery: Stage 3**

Payment Plan Notes  Exclude from debt recovery

Action date	Debt recovery stage	Debt collector	Posted cl	Pending c	Waived c	Date cleared	Amount owi	Interest incl	Interest calc	Payment plan	Notify	Notes
05/11/2019	Stage 3	Accountant	\$75.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$9,442.85	\$77.23	05/11/2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
18/10/2018	Stage 2		\$15.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	05/11/2019	\$1,907.37	\$281.27	18/10/2018	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18/10/2018	Stage 1		\$7.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	18/10/2018	\$1,892.37	\$281.27	18/10/2018	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Clear Debt Recovery Print History Create Action

## Stop Interest Accruing

If an owners corporation has approved for interest to no longer be accrued for levies past and present there are a few steps you will need take to stop interest from accruing.

Prior to making any adjustments, we recommend you Print/Save Levy positions and aged arrears reports for your records.

1. Remove Interest Rate

**WARNING - This will affect all previous arrears that maybe in Debt Recovery already.**

You will find the Levy interest rate field on the Financial tab of the Owners Corporation

Normal levy frequency

Levy discount rate (%)

Levy discount grace days

**Levy interest rate (%)**

Interest free period

Reserve funds

2. Increase the interest-free period

**WARNING - This will also affect all previous arrears that maybe in Debt Recovery**

already.

You will find the Interest free period below the Levy interest rate field on the Financial tab of the Owners Corporation.

Normal levy frequency: Quarterly

Levy discount rate (%): 10

Levy discount grace days: 0

Levy interest rate (%): 10.5

Interest free period: 34 Day

Reserve funds: 0.00

### 3. Receipt Allocation Order

To allow any already accrued interest to still remain, but ensure when a receipt is processed for a lot, the amount is received against levies not interest, you will need to change your receipt allocation order.

Navigate to Configure > Association Type

Order	Description
1	Future-dated Levies
2	Miscellaneous Invoices
3	Interest
4	Levy Arrears

**WARNING** - Automatic downloads may still allocate to interest where outstanding levies do not apply.

### 4. Levy Journal - Final Interest Taken

Finally, you will need to navigate to the Levy Journal and ensure the *Final Interest Taken* checkbox is ticked for each levy.

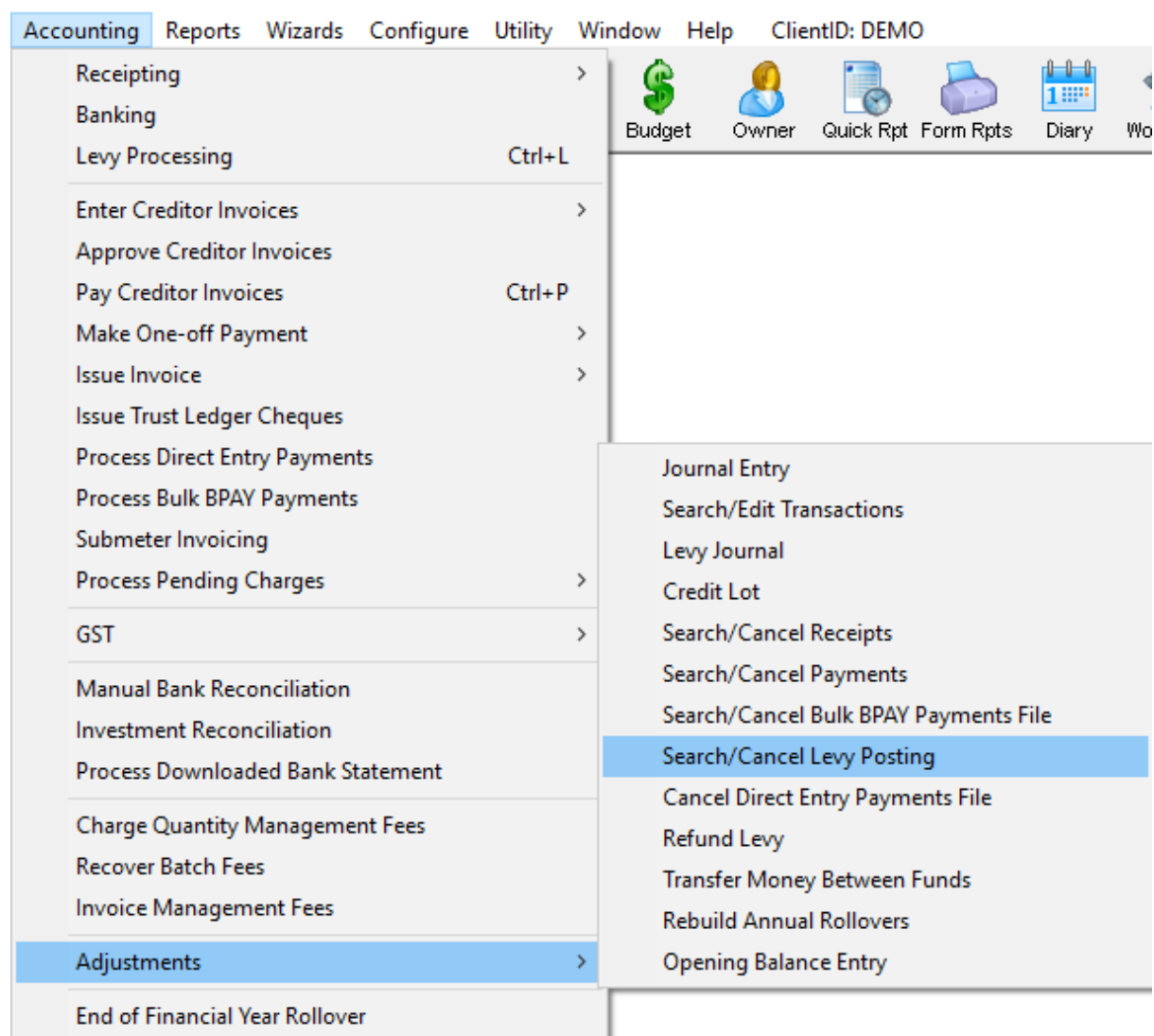
## Canceling Levies

Your Committee may decide to remove or change the quarterly levies to provide some relief to the Owners at his time.

There are two ways to cancel levies:

1. Cancel the Levy Posting

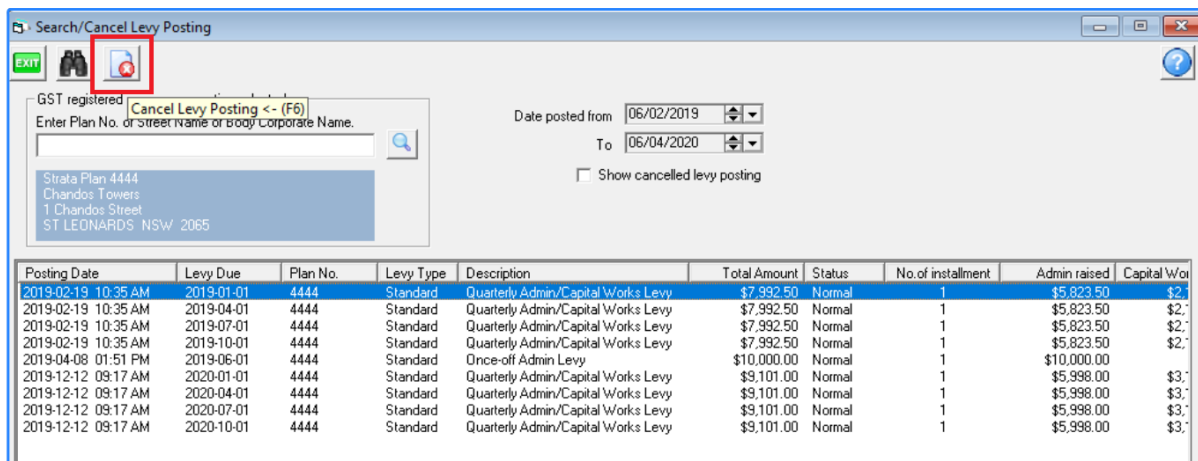
Navigate to Accounting > Adjustments > Search/Cancel Levy Posting.



Enter the strata plan number and hit enter.

In the 'Date posted from' and 'To' fields, enter a date range that would capture the date that you would have entered the levy posting into the system, not necessarily the date the levy was due and click on Search. Select the instalment levy posting you want to cancel and click Cancel Levy Posting.

**WARNING** - Levies must be cancelled in reverse order eg. Q4, Q3, Q2, Q1.

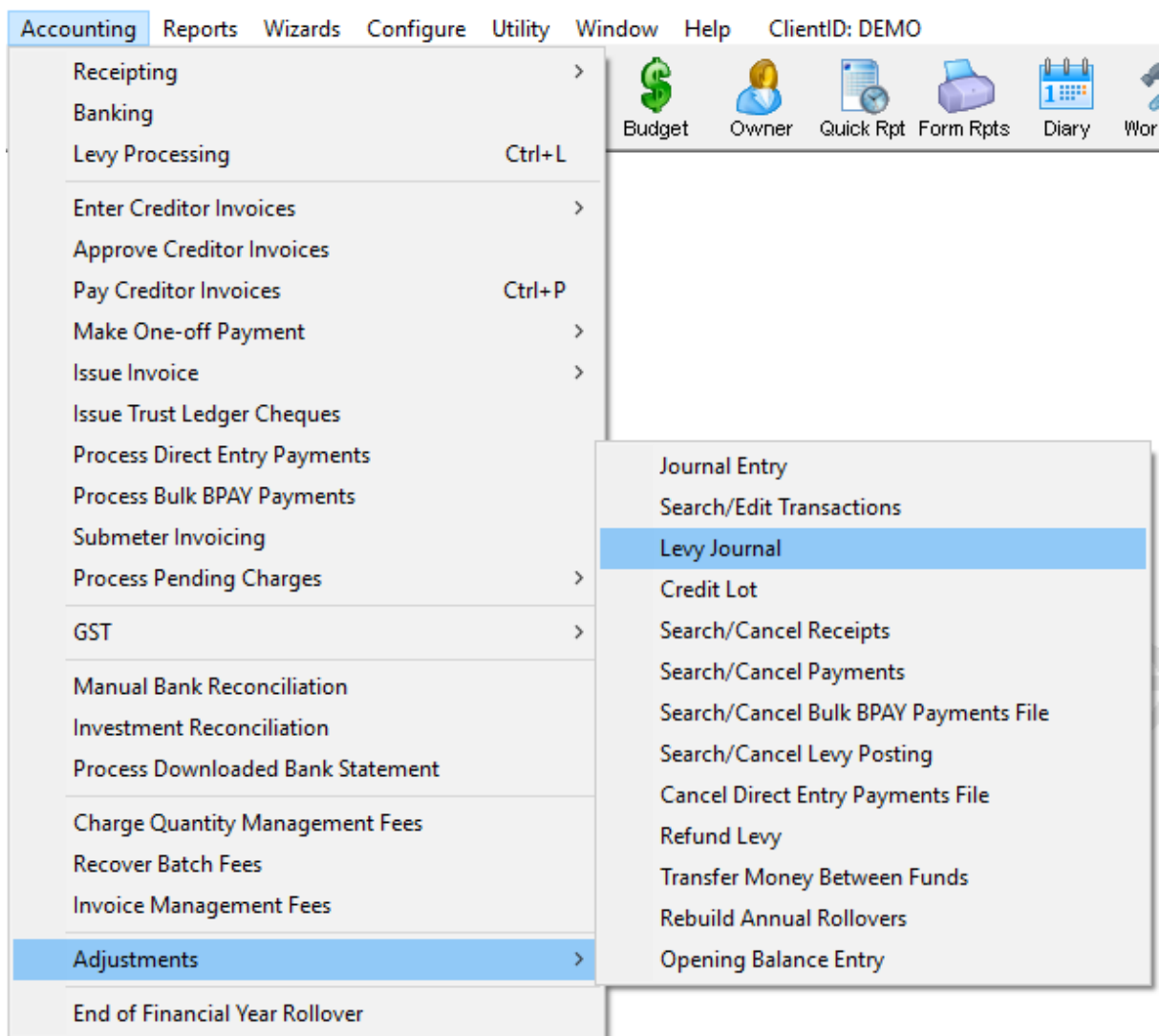


Strata Master will ask you to enter a reason for the cancellation, enter a reason and click on OK. You will then receive message confirming the levy has been cancelled.

The cancellation will be dated as at the current date, you can't backdate the cancellation.

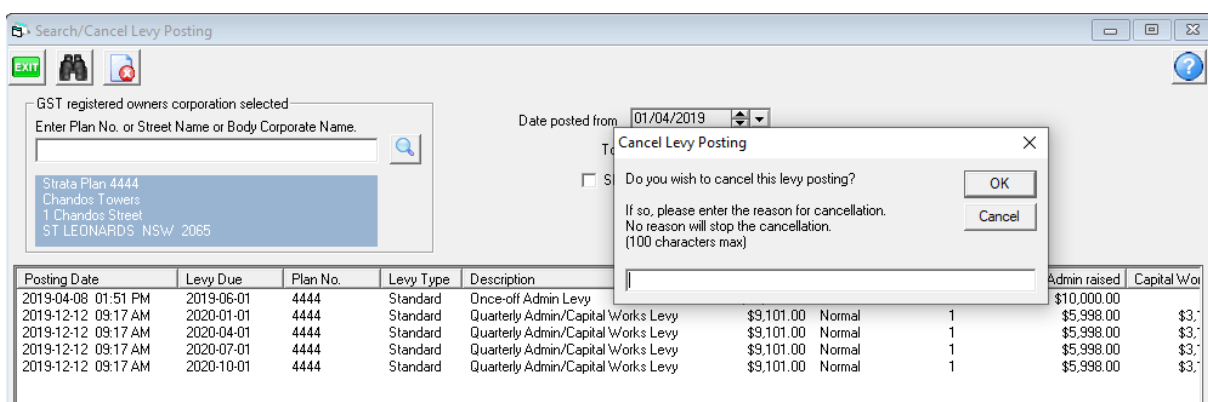
## 2. Cancel an Individual Levy

Navigate to Accounting > Adjustments > Levy Journal.



Enter the lot and strata plan number and hit enter.

Levies will appear in the middle of the screen, select the levy you want to cancel. Click on Cancel Levy/Invoice.



Strata Master will ask you to enter a reason for the cancellation, enter a reason and click on OK. You will then receive message confirming the levy has been cancelled.

You have now cancelled that individual levy for that individual lot. The cancellation will be dated as at the current date, you can't backdate the cancellation.

## Reminders for Principals

Managing a team and business remotely will be a new challenge for most Principals.

Luckily, Strata Master's reminders functionality allows you to keep track of the most important tasks across your portfolio.

You can configure reminders for the following:

- Insurance Policies
- Insurance Valuations
- Insurance Claims
- Insurance Commissions
- Contracts
- Agency Agreement
- Compliance
- Annual General Meetings
- Meeting Wizard Tasks
- By-Law Expiry
- By-Law Registration
- Proxies
- Corp Diary Entries

- Work Orders
- Quotes
- Notices not printed
- Notices not email
- Levies not posted
- Lots with a Payment Plan
- Available Funds
- Investment Account
- Financial year-end
- Change of Ownership

Choose the items that you want to be across by navigating to Manage > Reminders Configuration.

Use the checkboxes to select your choices, you can also configure when the 1st & 2nd reminders will be displayed.

For more detailed information check out the [Reminders setup and use guide](#), or alternatively watch the reminders [Top Tip!](#)

## Other Top Tips

If your default access contact has changed for a property, be sure to update it in Strata Master to remove the need to change it manually each time you raise a Work Order or Quote Request.

Navigate to Manage > Repairs & Maintenance



Repairs & Maintenance - Edit Mode

EXIT [Printer] [Refresh] [Save]

- GST registered owners corporation selected -

Enter Plan No. or Street Name or Body Corporate Name.

[Search Bar] [Search Icon]

Strata Scheme 4444  
Chandos Towers  
1 Chandos Street  
ST LEONARDS NSW 2065

- Cost limit -

Work order cost limit: \$0.00

Authorised cost limit: \$1,000.00

- R&M default access contact -

Access contact: Amy Newmarch [Contact List Icon]

Address line 1: Chandos Towers

Address line 2: 1/1 Chandos Street [Red X Icon]

Address line 3: ST LEONARDS NSW 2065

Home phone: [Input Field]

Work phone: [Input Field]

Mobile: [Input Field]

Fax: [Input Field]

Email: amy.newmarch@rockend.com.au

Use the binoculars to search for your contact, this contact will now automatically appear as the access contact for all your maintenance requests.

## Levy Wizard Messaging

Are you getting a lot of queries into your office regarding levies? Utilise the Levy Wizard Message functionality to allow you to add messages at either an agency or corporation level that will automatically be included on any of the following notices issued through the Levy Wizard:

- Levy Notice

- Issue Statement
- Debt Recovery (Manual and Staged without template)
- Owner Invoice
- Submeter Invoice

Users with the required security access to the Configuration menu should complete the following steps to utilise default levy wizard messages from the Levy Wizard.

### Setup Messages

*Configure > Agency > Option #3*

Place the screen in Edit mode, tick the checkbox labelled *Levy Wizard Messages*, and Save.



Levy Wizard messages

Use default wording

Select this option to automatically display messages on notices, statements and invoices issued from the Levy Wizard. To customise your agency and/or owners corporation default messages launch Configure > Levy Wizard Messages.

*Configure > Levy Wizard Messages > Agency*

Place the screen in Edit mode and record default messages for each notice type, and Save.

Levy Wizard Message Configuration : Agency Settings - Edit Mode

EXIT [Icons]

The wording recorded on this screen will be displayed on the message section of notices, statements and invoices.

Where an owners corporation requires specific wording you can set this up in Configure > Levy Wizard Messages > Owners Corporation. Where no plan specific wording exists the agency default wording on this screen will be used.

Note: The automatic use of messaging on notices must first be enabled in Configure > Agency > Option # 3 tab of Agency Configuration.

Levy Notice message

Debt Recovery - Manual or Statement style message

Statement message

Owner invoice message

Submeter invoice message

This will establish a default message for notices issued for the Levy Wizard.

*Configure > Levy Wizard Messages > Owners Corporation*

Select the Owners Corporation, place the screen in Edit mode, record default messages for each notice type, and Save.

This will establish any plan specific messages for notices issued from the Levy Wizard

There is also a Levy Wizard Messages [Top Tip](#) available for you to watch.

09/04/2020 1:22 pm AEST