

En bloc Sales Seminar



With property consultants and analysts predicting an increase in en bloc sales as the economy turns around, APFM held a timely seminar En Bloc Sales – Issues & Solutions

Supported by Ngee Ann Polytechnic's Centre for Real Estate, the seminar attracted about 70 participants. They came mainly from the property industry, but there were some members of the public. It was held at the poly's Staff Hub Orchid and Rose Rooms on 3 July.

Three distinguished speakers provided an overview on the incorporation of en bloc sales in the Land Titles Strata Act. The speakers were a lawyer, Mr Ho Kin San; Dr Alice Christudason from the School of Building and Real Estate, NUS; and our APFM President, Mr Wan Fook Kong.

Issues covered included aspects of the legislation affecting subsidiary proprietors, minority rights and operations.



The seminar was well-attended and participants had many questions. Some enquired when APFM would be holding more such seminars!

A new committee for the new millennium

The new committee was elected at our Annual General meeting held on 30 July. *(Sitting, from left)* Theresa Poh-Hon Treasurer; Wan Fook Kong-President; Jordan Neo-Vice President; Jeffrey Chua-Hon Secretary. *(Standing, from left)* Wong Yew Heng-Asst Hon Treasurer; Ng Keng Siong-Member; Reymond Fernandez-Member; Florence Ong-Member; Leung Lap Kuen Victor-Member; Alfred Chng-Asst Hon Secretary; Gurgit Singh-Member.

New Address

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User Satisfaction and Expectations of Management Services in Private Residential Estates

A Survey by the Centre for Real Estate Management in the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Building Department

Introduction

In October 1998, Ngee Ann Polytechnic released the findings of a survey done by 60 final year students. The survey's objective was to determine user satisfaction with management services in private residential properties.

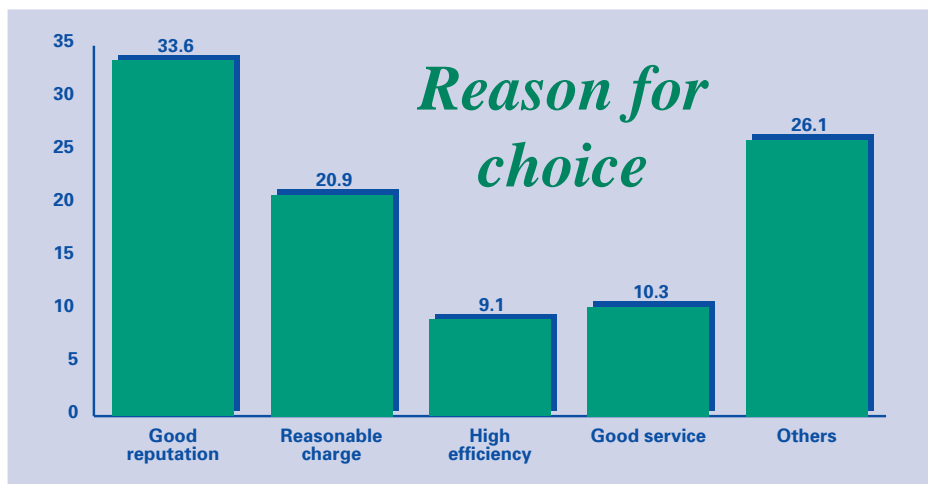
The survey was supported by the APFM who gave the Polytechnic students permission to conduct interviews with residents in condominiums managed by members.

The significant finding of the survey was that most owners were satisfied with the services of their managing agents. It is also interesting that many respondents were not aware that managing agents did not have to be licensed.

They felt that licencing was needed and would set the standards for the qualifications and services they expected.

Generally, 713 respondents (68.2%) felt that their present managing agents met their expectations and 700 respondents (66.9%) expressed their intention to re-appoint them. However, 183 respondents (17.5%) said that they would not re-appoint their managing agents.

The two main reasons for not re-appointing them were inefficiency and lack of professionalism. They expected them to be sufficiently experienced to be able to solve and handle problems in an organized manner.



Responsibility was also an important factor. Managing agents need to make sure that daily operations are properly done. They also need a positive attitude towards residents to enhance communication.

The fees paid by residents were also important: they must be reasonable.

Managing agents should try to satisfy the above points in order to serve residents better.

Here is a summary of the findings:

Why appoint MA

Good reputation (33.6%) was the main factor in choosing managing agents.

Some respondents said they felt more confident in entrusting the management

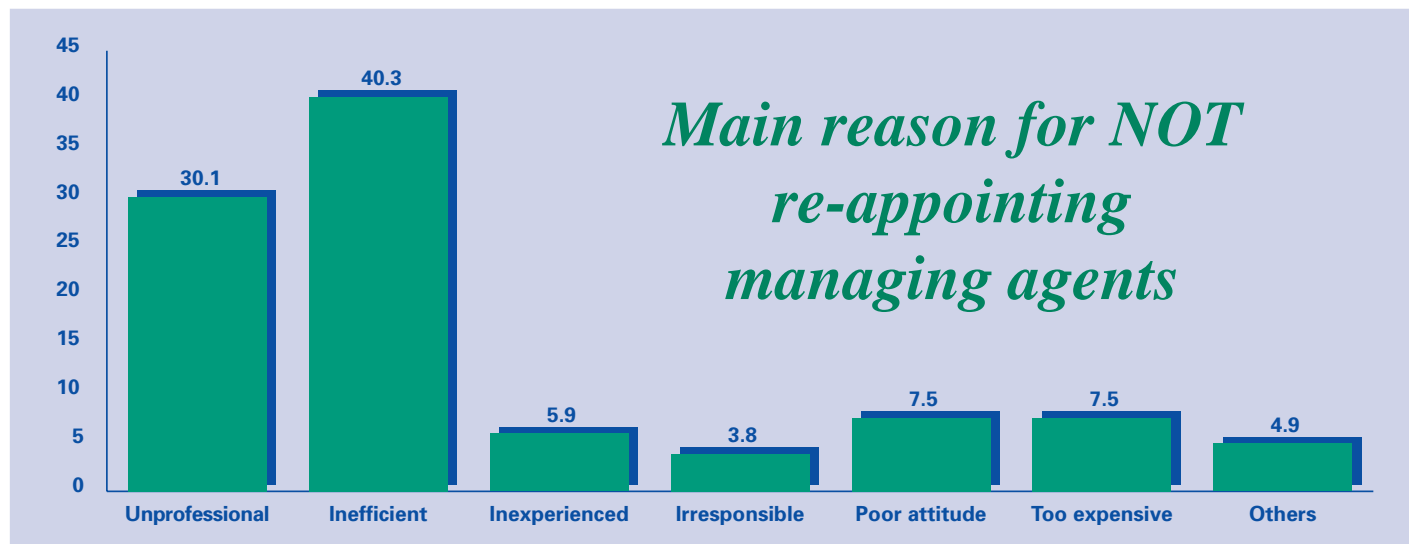
of their developments to experienced and reputable agents.

This was often the case in new developments where the subsidiary proprietors have no idea which managing agency to appoint. They often preferred to look for a reputable agency – to provide them with a sense of security that the job would be done well.

Appointing a reputable agency means paying more. For some, paying more simply means better quality services. However, others (20.9%) were not willing to pay more – a reasonable charge was their main consideration.

Other reasons (26.1%) given for their choice of managing agents included:

The recommendations of friends,





‘Efficiency and promptness’ was the second most important criterion (21.7%) with a ‘Sense of responsibility’ (20.8%) a very close third. ‘Property management knowledge’ and ‘Reputation’ were criteria named by the remaining 19% of the respondents.

Licensing of MA

Most of the respondents interviewed (74%) felt that there was a need to license managing agents in order to promote professionalism. Many respondents were surprised that managing agents don’t need a license now.

Respondents thought a licence was needed to improve the professionalism (72.9%), competency (17.2%) and ethics (7.9%) of managing agents. Respondents felt that licensing would set the standard for qualifications and services expected from managing agents.

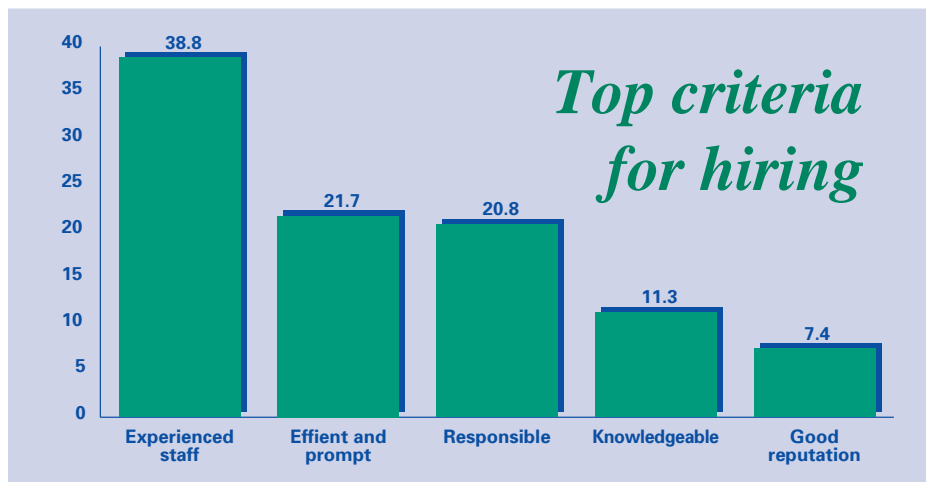
Recommendations

As a result of their survey, the students recommended that the licensing of managing agents would be an effective means to ensure satisfactory standards of property management services are met.

With the formation of the Association of Property and Facility Managers, a governing body could be established to give accreditation to qualified agents. The Association can also help to improve professionalism and standards by organizing training courses, skill-enhancement programmes as well as human resource management, information technology and the latest technology in building maintenance.

The Association could also work with institutions of higher learning to ensure that graduates are made aware of the opportunities available.

These would all be moves in the right direction to ensure high standards of professionalism and expertise in the provision of management services.



relatives or colleagues;

Managing agents’ ability to provide an ‘all-in’ service;

Managing agents did a good job so they were re-appointed.

The 26.1% also includes the residents who gave no reasons: who were indifferent to management matters.

Why NOT re-appoint MA

Lack of efficiency accounts for 40% of all the reasons for not re-appointing managing agents. The inefficiency may be the managing agents’ failure to respond within a reasonable time to requests and complaints or their failure to rectify defects and prescribe remedies.

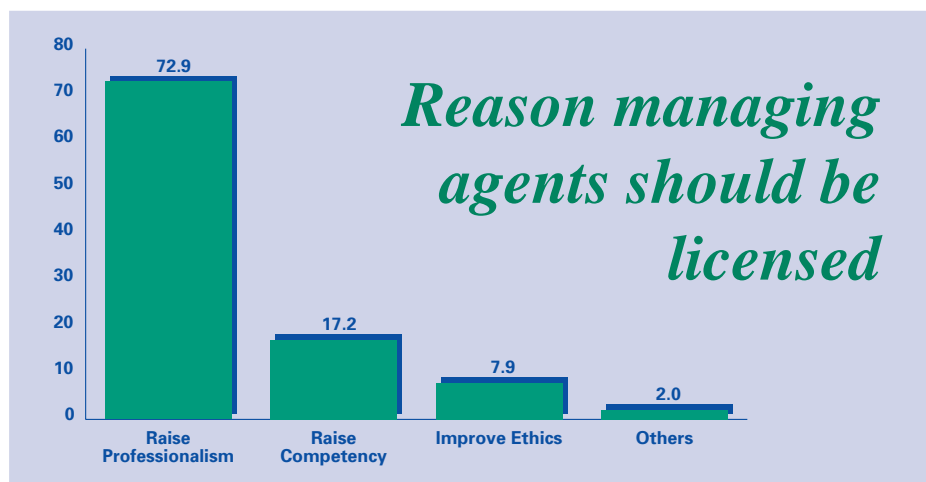
About 30% of the respondents said their managing agents lacked professional skill in estate management. Respondents looked for systematic management, but wanted flexibility to adapt to changing needs.

Another 25% complained of the managerial character and attitude of the managing agents (7.5%), their fees

(7.5%), their lack of experience (5.9%) and irresponsibility (3.8%).

Criteria for hiring MA

The most important criterion for hiring managing agents was ‘Qualified and experienced staff’ (38.8%), giving residents more confidence in their managing agents. Experience meant they could deal with any situation.



A new ferrocement roofing system for HDB blocks

A paper by

Lau Joo Ming, Chief Structural Engineer,

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in the Structural Engineering Department of the Building and Development Division of the HDB



The old roofing system requires a waterproof layer on the main roof.



Stools are placed on the main roof to support the secondary roof.

Abstract

An innovation on precast ferrocement roof slabs has done away with the whole tedious process of applying waterproof membranes on main roof slabs, the practice for the last 30 years. The new system is maintenance-free and can last the building's life-span. This is a quantum leap forward for HDB's roofing.

This paper covers the design and some functional aspects of the new slabs.

1. Introduction

In tropical Singapore, the roof of a building serves the function of sheltering residents from the sun and rain. Therefore, a roof has to be resistant to both water and heat.

For existing HDB apartment blocks, this is achieved through the use of several building components working in combination with each other.

There is the main roof of reinforced concrete slabs constructed at a gradient so that the roof slopes to drain water.

Over these roof slabs is a waterproof membrane serving as additional protection against water seepage.

Finally, there is a secondary roof, consisting of another layer of slabs raised

above the main roof providing an air gap between the two.

2. Evolution of roof design

The roofs of HDB apartment blocks have undergone many improvements over the years. For example, the concrete used has been upgraded to a more durable type and the fall of the roof is now steeper. These changes are reflected in Figure 1.

In its final form the old roofing system consisted of grade 40 reinforced concrete slab laid at a gradient of 1:50, a layer of waterproof membrane and an elevated secondary roofing slab. (The layer of trapped air between the main and secondary roofs prevented heat transmission to the dwellings below.)

The surface of the main roof slab was power trowelled to provide a smooth finish and a dense external surface for better water resistance.

3. Re-designing the system

The old roofing system, while it works quite well, has some inherent problems associated with the waterproof membrane, made up of several layers of bituminous material.

a) Its application is laborious and time consuming as it has to be done layer by

layer. And the layers can only be applied in good weather as they have to be applied on a dry surface and need time to dry and set.

b) If not allowed to dry and set, the chemical solvent used in the membrane can be washed away by rainwater and stain the external walls of the building.

c) The membrane needs to be maintained, and replaced periodically.

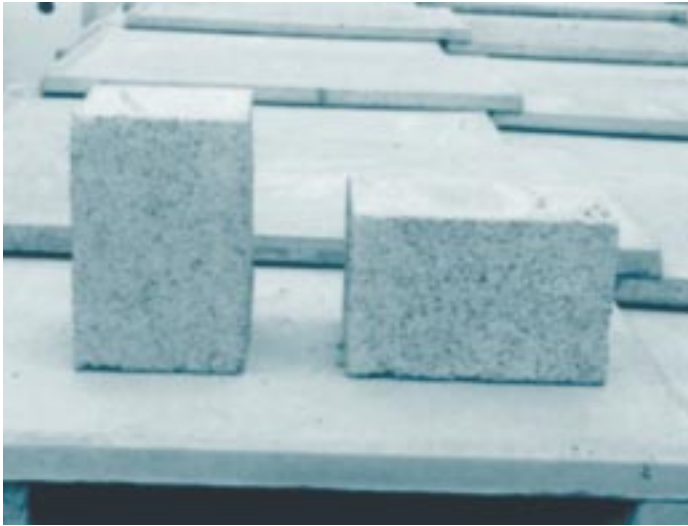
To reduce the maintenance work, The HDB's Structural Engineering Department has re-designed the roofing system.

The innovative solution involves modifying the precast ferrocement secondary roofing slab to drain off rainwater directly, doing away with the need for a waterproof membrane and avoiding the recurrent maintenance costs.

4. The new solution

The improved precast ferrocement roofing slab is 600mm x 900mm and 20mm thick. Reinforced with layers of galvanised fine wire mesh, these slabs are dense and impermeable to water because of the high grade of mortar used in their manufacture.

The improved roof slabs come with three upstands and one downstand, allowing them to interlock with each



Two types of stool are used to offer six different heights in increments of 30mm.



This is one of the trial installations in Sembawang.

other; in effect, acting like roof tiles. The upstands also have a stiffening effect, allowing for thinner slabs.

The slabs are laid at a gradient similar to those of the main roof structure, which means that rain water will now flow over the secondary roof slab instead of spilling onto the main roof.

5. Pilot implementation

To test the effectiveness of the new system, four pilot projects involving 16 new blocks in Sembawang, Woodlands and Sengkang were selected for a trial.

The main contractors welcomed the new system as it helped to speed up roof installation. The number of days needed to complete each roof of an HDB block was reduced from 14 to 4. There was also an increase in labour productivity by as much as 50%.

6. Impact of new system

Other benefits include cost savings arising from the omission of the waterproof material and the use of less cement in manufacturing the thinner precast ferrocement slabs.

Without the need to replace the waterproof membrane regularly, building maintenance costs will also be reduced.

There is no doubt that the new roofing system will make an impact. The successful pilot implementation has paved the way for full implementation of the new system in all building contracts tendered from January 1998 onwards.

7. Conclusion

The new precast ferrocement slabs have dual functions. They provide heat insulation as well as a shield from rain water for the main roof.

They can be easily installed on site and have eliminated the tedious work of applying a waterproof membrane on the main roof slabs.

The new system also solves the problem of stained facades arising from the application of waterproof membranes.

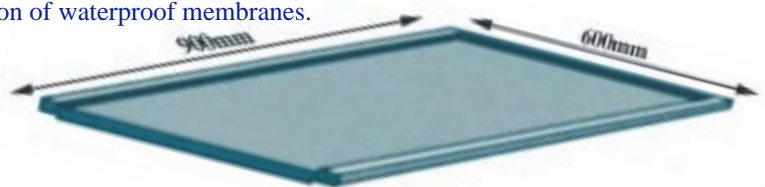
Most importantly, it speeds up roof construction work and achieves higher labour productivity.

The application of this new roofing system can be extended to older housing estates and reduce the need to maintain and replace the waterproof membrane – avoiding the recurrent maintenance costs.

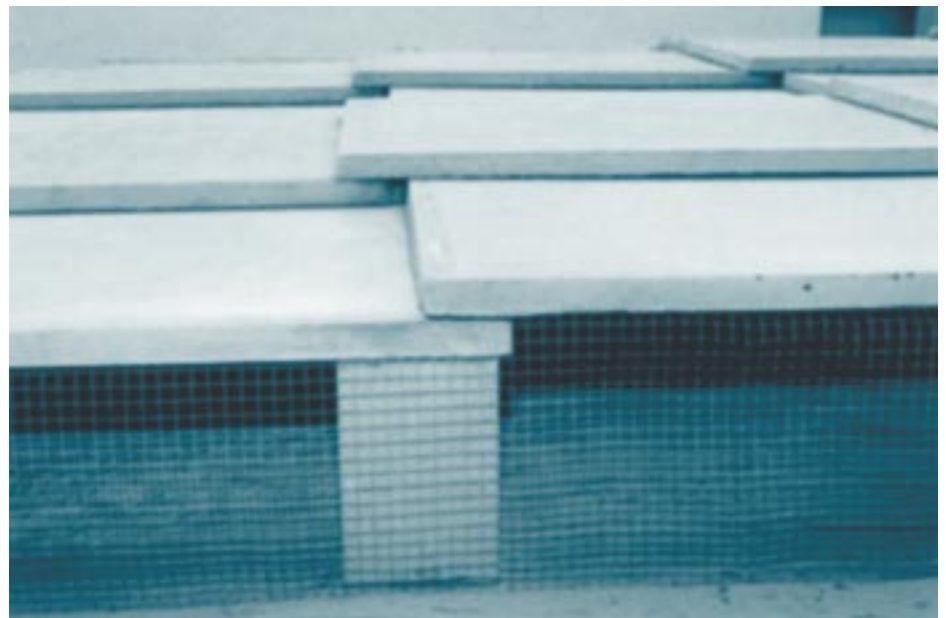
The new roofing system not only reflects the emphasis on R&D at HDB, it also shows that HDB is making improvements to its building processes.

Acknowledgement

The authors wish to thank the Prefabrication Technology Centre and all those who have offered their invaluable assistance in this research study.



The new precast secondary roof slabs have three upstands and one downstand allowing them to interlock with each other when they are laid at a gradient in a manner similar to roof tiles.



By the way

The APFM's submission to the Select Committee on the Land Titles (Strata) (Amendment) Bill (No. 28/98), which deals specifically with en bloc sales, was presented by our President, Mr Wan Fook Kong, Vice-President Mr Jordan Neo and Council Member Mr Tan Yew Teck.

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