Context of the Study

Broadening application of the Legislation:
Since its introduction in 1961, New South Wales (NSW) Strata Titles Act has been reviewed and amended a number of times to account for the broadening application of the legislation. ‘From the beginning, the Strata Titles Act was intended for conventional multi-storey buildings’ though the legislation has become ‘applicable to any created cubic space with boundaries defined by floors, walls and ceilings or other parts of a building’ (Paulsson, 2007 p. 158). The way in which the legislation has been applied to such a range of developments has made Strata Title an increasingly popular form of subdividing property. The growing number of Strata Schemes in existence has assisted in accommodating a growing population and has naturally corresponded with a growing percentage of the population occupying Strata lots. Consequently this has caused an increasing economic value to be linked to Strata Title.

Trend towards increased Strata Title development:
Unlike other countries of the world such as those in Europe, Asia and North America, there is little collective tradition of higher density living in Australia (Troy, 1996 Cited in Randolph, 2006). Typically housing development has ‘taken the form of a single house ... on a separate block of land’ (Forster, 2004 Cited in Randolph, 2006). In the major cities of Australia, multi-unit type dwellings have been present since the first half of the twentieth century however this type of housing has still remained ‘a minority ... in terms of the overall housing stock’ (Randolph, 2006 p. 474). Currently it is becoming apparent that housing trends may be changing course as ‘planners have uniformly espoused flats and other higher density attached dwellings, as the main future for urban housing’ (Randolph, 2006 p. 474).

In the context of this thesis project this trend is interesting as higher density dwellings such as flats, units, semi-detached housing, town houses, villas etc. are generally delivered on a Strata Title basis. Therefore, projections that anticipate an increase in development of this nature highlight the importance of ensuring consistent improvement of the NSW Strata System.

Source of Issues:
In recent times it has become apparent that the plans prepared by Surveyors for Strata Title subdivisions are becoming a tool for the long-term management of these Strata Complexes. In addition to this, society has become more complex with a need to map the cadastre in more detail and correctness. Accordingly it is important that Strata Plans can accurately describe Strata Complexes for which they are prepared.

However the complicated architecture in many modern developments along with developers designing exotic Strata Schemes that were not necessarily envisaged under the legislation (Walsham and Deal, 2002 p. 10) has introduced complications with respect to the information shown in Strata Plans. For these reasons, the preparation of a Strata Plan has become a challenging task and in many cases Surveyors are having difficulty in defining these complex schemes on their plans.

With this being the case it is possible that the present format of Strata Plans may not represent the best structure. Therefore it is important that we seek innovative ideas and consider ways in which the correctness and clarity of plans, legislation and management documents can be improved and combined to better define Strata Schemes.