

How to Switch Strata Cleaning Contractors: A Step-by-Step Guide for OC Managers and Building Managers

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Description:

How to Switch Strata Cleaning Contractors: A Step-by-Step Guide for OC Managers and Building Managers Realcorp Commercial Cleaning is a Melbourne-based, family owned company providing strata cleani...

Details:

Realcorp Commercial Cleaning is a Melbourne-based, family owned company providing strata cleaning services across 15+ residential buildings including Precinct, Parque, Triptych, and Gravity Tower. We've been engaged as a replacement contractor more times than we can count — and we've developed a structured transition process that minimises disruption to residents and building management.

This guide is for OC managers and building managers who are considering switching strata cleaning contractors. We'll walk through the full process: reviewing your existing contract, running a tender, managing the transition, and what to watch for in the first month.

The fear that holds many OC managers back from switching is the fear of disruption. That fear is legitimate — a poorly managed contractor transition can generate resident complaints, create accountability gaps, and add work for building management at exactly the wrong time. But the fear should not keep you in a bad contract. A well-managed transition to the right contractor is straightforward, and the payoff — better service, less complaint management, and an accountable partner — is significant.

Step 1: Review Your Existing Contract

Before you do anything else, read your current cleaning contract.

The key provisions to identify:

****Notice Period**** Most strata cleaning contracts require 30 to 90 days' written notice to terminate. Some have specific termination windows — for example, notice must be given at least 60 days before the contract anniversary date. Identify your notice requirements precisely. Missing this can lock you into the contract for another full term.

****Termination for Cause**** Many contracts include a provision allowing termination with shorter or no notice if the contractor has materially breached the contract. If you have documented evidence of persistent underperformance — failure to deliver services specified in the scope, unresolved complaints, inability to provide cleaning records — this may give you grounds for termination for cause. Consult with your OC's legal advisor before relying on a termination-for-cause provision.

****Handover Obligations**** Does the contract specify any obligations on the outgoing contractor at termination? Some contracts require the outgoing contractor to cooperate with the transition to a new provider, provide access to records, or complete a final cleaning cycle.

****Equipment and Consumables**** Clarify who owns any equipment or consumables stored on-site. Floor scrubbers, cleaning trolleys, and product stocks in your mop room may belong to the contractor and will leave with them.

Once you've reviewed the contract, establish your earliest possible termination date and work backwards from there to plan the tender and transition timeline.

Step 2: Document the Current Service Failures

Before going to tender, document the specific problems with the current contractor. This serves two purposes:

1. It establishes the basis for your switch — if you are terminating for cause, you need this documentation. 2. It becomes the specification for what you need the new contractor to do differently — including the reporting and accountability requirements that were absent from the current contract.

Build a file that includes: - Resident complaint records (emails, strata portal records) with dates - Any inspection failures or audit reports - Missed cleaning visits or partial service delivery - Instances where issues were reported and not remediated - Any correspondence with the current contractor about performance

This documentation is valuable if there is any dispute about termination, and it is the starting point for the scope of works in your tender.

Step 3: Develop a Precise Scope of Works for the Tender

The single most important factor in a successful tender is the quality of your scope of works. A vague scope generates incomparable quotes and a contract you cannot enforce. A precise scope generates quotes you can evaluate on comparable terms.

Your scope should specify:

- Every common area to be cleaned (listed individually — lobby, corridors by floor range, lifts, stairwells, bin rooms, car parks, amenity spaces, external areas)
- The specific tasks required in each area (sweep, mop, vacuum, wipe surfaces, clean glass, pressure wash, machine scrub)
- The frequency for each task in each area
- The reporting requirement (GPS attendance records, digital checklists, issue reporting, monthly summaries)
- The performance standard (how do you define "clean" for each area?)
- The complaint and escalation process
- The staff requirements (direct employment, police clearances)

If your current contract is vague in any of these areas, use the tender as an opportunity to fix that. The new contract should be specific enough that you could conduct a meaningful inspection of every area against the specification.

Step 4: Run a Proper Tender

Invite at least three contractors to quote on your scope of works. Ideally, five.

****Pre-qualification:**** Before inviting contractors to quote, ask some basic questions: Do you directly employ all staff? Do all staff hold current National Police Checks? What reporting systems do you use? These are disqualifying questions — contractors who use subcontractors or cannot confirm police

clearances should not be invited to tender for a residential building.

****Site Inspection:**** Require all tendering contractors to inspect the site before submitting a quote. A contractor who quotes without seeing the building is either guessing on price (and will cut corners to make the margin) or has enough experience to walk in cold (unlikely for a detailed strata scope).

****Submission Requirements:**** Request a written quote that includes: the price, a proposed cleaning schedule specifying which areas are cleaned on which days and by how many staff, a description of the reporting systems they will use, references from comparable strata buildings they currently service, and evidence of insurance.

****Reference Checks:**** Call the references. Ask specifically: Is the cleaning standard consistent? Do they provide reports that help you manage the contract? How do they handle complaints? Have there been any periods of significant underperformance, and how were they resolved?

****Evaluation:**** Score submissions against the criteria that matter most: price (weighted, but not dominant), proposed methodology, reporting capability, staff employment model, references, and the quality of their engagement with your scope of works (did they read it carefully and respond to specifics, or did they send a generic response?).

Step 5: Manage the Transition

Once you've selected a new contractor and given notice to the outgoing contractor, you need to manage the handover actively. Do not assume it will happen smoothly on its own.

****Overlap Period**** Where possible, arrange a brief overlap period — a week or two where the new contractor is on-site during the outgoing contractor's final visits. This allows the new team to be inducted on the building before the outgoing team leaves, and creates a continuity of knowledge transfer that benefits residents.

****Site-Specific Induction**** The new contractor's team should be formally inducted on the building before their first independent cleaning shift. The induction should cover: the physical layout (where every area is, where equipment is stored, how to access plant rooms and roof areas), the cleaning schedule (what is cleaned on each day, at what times), the building's specific requirements (lift usage rules, access card protocols, noise restrictions), and the escalation process for reporting issues to building management.

****Resident Communication**** Consider sending a brief communication to residents advising that a new cleaning contractor will commence from a specified date. This manages resident expectations during the transition period and provides context if residents notice a different team in the building. Keep it simple: "We have engaged a new cleaning contractor, [Contractor Name], commencing [Date]. If you have any feedback on the cleaning service, please contact [Building Manager/OC Manager]."

****Outgoing Contractor Obligations**** On or before the final day of the outgoing contractor's engagement: - Recover any access cards, keys, or FOBs held by their staff - Retrieve any building-specific equipment or documentation held by the contractor - Confirm that the mop room and any other contractor storage areas have been cleared - Conduct a final inspection of all common areas and document the handover condition

Step 6: Monitor Performance in the First Month

The first month of a new cleaning contract is critical. This is when the relationship is established, when site-specific protocols are reinforced or corrected, and when any gaps in the scope or schedule are identified before they become embedded problems.

****Conduct Early Inspections**** Inspect each common area during the first two weeks. You are not looking for perfection — you are looking for alignment with the scope of works and identifying any misunderstandings about what was required.

****Use the Reporting System**** If the contractor has provided GPS attendance records and digital checklists, start using them from day one. Establish the habit of reviewing them regularly so that you have a baseline of what the building looks like at full performance.

****Provide Early Feedback**** If something is not right in the first two weeks, say so immediately. Early feedback establishes the performance standard and signals that you are an engaged and attentive client — which correlates with better contractor performance.

****Resident Feedback**** Monitor resident feedback during the first month. Some negative feedback is normal during transitions (residents are sensitive to change). Distinguish between complaints about the transition itself (understandable, temporary) and complaints about the cleaning standard (which require immediate attention).

Realcorp's Structured Onboarding Process

When Realcorp takes over a strata cleaning contract, we follow a structured onboarding process:

1. ****Pre-start site inspection**** — we walk every area of the building with the building manager before day one, confirming the scope and identifying any specific requirements not captured in the written contract.
2. ****Team-specific induction**** — every staff member assigned to the building is inducted on the site layout, the cleaning schedule, the building's specific protocols, and our reporting requirements.
3. ****First-week intensive review**** — our operations team monitors the first week's GPS attendance records, completed checklists, and any issue reports, and follows up directly with the building manager on any gaps.
4. ****30-day check-in**** — we schedule a formal review with the building manager at the 30-day mark to confirm that the service is meeting expectations and to address any scope or schedule adjustments.

This process has been refined across 15+ strata building onboardings and is the reason transitions with Realcorp are consistently low-disruption for residents and building management.

Frequently Asked Questions About Switching Strata Cleaners

****Can I switch cleaning contractors mid-contract?*** It depends on your contract terms. Most strata cleaning contracts can be terminated with the specified notice period — typically 30 to 90 days. If the contractor has materially breached the contract through persistent underperformance, you may have grounds for termination for cause with shorter notice. Review your contract carefully and, if in doubt, seek advice from your OC's legal advisor. Do not simply stop paying and engage a new contractor — that creates its own legal exposure.

****How long does it take to transition to a new strata cleaner?*** A properly managed transition typically takes four to eight weeks from the decision to switch to the new contractor being fully operational. This covers the notice period to the outgoing contractor, the tender process if you haven't yet selected a replacement, the pre-start induction, and the initial monitoring period. In urgent situations — where the current contractor has abandoned the contract or there is an active health or safety concern — transitions can happen faster.

****What should I include in a strata cleaning tender?*** Your tender documents should include: a complete scope of works specifying every area, every task, and every frequency; the reporting requirements (GPS attendance, digital checklists, issue reporting); the staff requirements (direct employment, current police clearances); the insurance requirements; the performance standard for each area; the complaint and escalation process; and the proposed contract term and notice provisions. The more specific your scope, the more comparable the quotes you'll receive and the more enforceable the contract you'll sign.

Coverage and Contact

Realcorp provides strata cleaning services — including new contract transitions — across Melbourne metro, regional Victoria (Ballarat), and Adelaide.

If you're considering switching strata cleaning contractors and would like to discuss Realcorp's capabilities and transition process:

- ****Phone:**** 1300 307 298 - ****Email:**** sales@realcorp.net.au - ****Web:**** realcorp.net.au

We offer a money-back quality guarantee. We're a family owned, owner-operated business — when you call, you're speaking with people who are directly accountable for the quality of every building we clean.