



Apartment owners could be heading for a fall

Young lives on the line

By ROSIE SQUIRES

APARTMENT owners and body corporate committees could be blamed for children's injuries caused by falling out of windows this summer.

The number of children rushed to hospital with serious injuries from falls through flyscreens has soared in NSW, with at least 16 hospital admissions this year.

University academics and strata management peak bodies have issued a warning to property owners — if a child falls through the window, you could be at fault.

University of NSW law lecturer Cathy Sherry said windows and balconies of apartments were common property, and therefore the responsibility of owners' corporations, the property owners.

"If a child fell from a window because it was not fitted with an easily installed lock or limiting device, it is arguable, but by no



Survivor: Looking back up

means certain, that an owners' corporation could be liable," she said.

"As owners of property we have basic obligations to other people. It is not unreasonable to expect we will take basic precautions, like installing window-limiting devices, to save children's lives and protect them from serious injury."

Ms Sherry said she wants

the Government to amend the Strata Schemes Management Act forcing owners to ensure windows and balconies are child-safe.

National Community Titles Institute executive officer Mark Lever said child safety should be incentive enough for body corporates to install basic precautions.

Shanthini Rathanthas, 36, will never forget the fear she experienced when her son Mayavan, 3, fell through the flyscreen on the first floor of their Strathfield home. "We were lucky he did not break a bone. I am paranoid now. You think a fly screen is a secure thing, but it's not," she said.

An 18-month-old girl who fell from the window of a third-floor unit in Lakemba last Saturday remains in a critical condition at Westmead Children's Hospital.

The NSW Health Department today launched a windows and balconies falls prevention advertising campaign.



Close call: Mayavan Rathanthas near the window he fell through