

Warrnambool hospital gets facelift to remove cladding



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📷 Workers are replacing the cladding on the outside of the newer part of Warrnambool's hospital. Picture by Sean McKenna

Combustible cladding on the newest section of Warrnambool's hospital is being replaced as part of a \$160 million project across the state.

The South West Healthcare building, which is about a decade old, has been getting the facelift after an audit found the cladding on a number of hospitals across the state were non-compliant.

Removal of the cladding on government buildings across the state follows the fire in London's Grenfell Tower that killed 72 people in

2017.

The government refused to say how much the Warrnambool works – which began in October – was costing but the work was expected to be completed in late February.

A spokesperson for the Department of Health said the hospital services would continue uninterrupted while cladding rectification works were completed.

"Warrnambool Base Hospital continues to safely provide high-quality services to Victoria's south-west region," the spokesperson said.

"The cladding project team has worked with South West Healthcare to minimise any construction impacts to staff, patients and visitors."

Following the establishment of a Victorian taskforce, the cladding was found on 18 public hospital buildings but the government assured patients they had been deemed safe to occupy.

In 2018, the cladding was removed from seven high-priority hospitals including The Royal Women's Hospital and Geelong University Hospital.

Then in the 2019/20 Victorian Budget, another \$160 million was set aside over the next four years to continue the cladding rectification works on government buildings, including all remaining hospitals such as Warrnambool.

A ban on high-risk cladding on new multi-storey buildings came into effect in the state in 2021.

Warrnambool's hospital is set to undergo a \$384 million revamp, and the recladding works are being carried out ahead of that upgrade.

Works on the redevelopment of the Ryot Street site moved a step closer earlier this month when construction began on the Regional Logistics Distribution Centre in the city's industrial estate.

Relocating the linen service offsite will free up the space for the major redevelopment on the hospital site which includes the new emergency department and theatre complex.