

Victoria gives apartment owners longer to make cladding claims

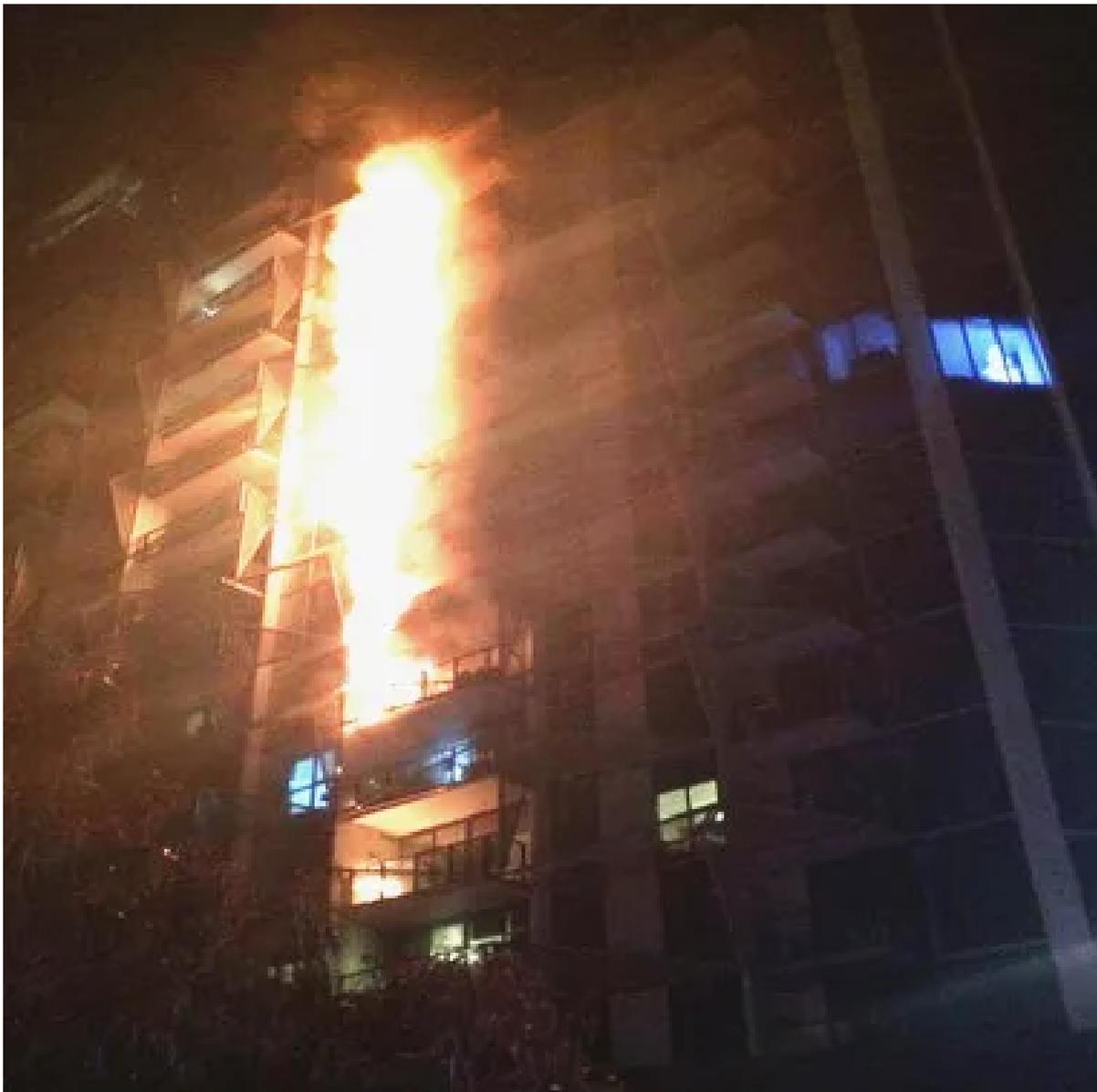
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Victoria will give apartment owners an extra two years to launch claims against builders that installed combustible cladding on their buildings.

This extension from 10 to 12 years in *The Cladding Safety Victoria Bill* will give the state government, which last year passed separate legislation to allow it to pursue builders on behalf of owners, more time to claw back funds over the installation of non-compliant panels on buildings.



Cladding on Melbourne's Lacrosse apartments in Docklands burns in 2014.

"This is great news for our clients, who could now potentially save millions of dollars in rectification works, said Sahil Bhasin, the national general manager of building consultancy Roscon.

The bill due to be introduced into Parliament on Thursday will also split Cladding Safety Victoria, the agency responsible for overseeing the state's \$600 million rectification program, out from the [Victorian Building Authority regulator](#) and make it a standalone body.

This would allow Cladding Safety Victoria to pursue cheaper – but just as safe – rectification methods than the wholesale removal of all combustible panels and allow the rectification funds to go further, said Jonathan Barnett, the managing director of fire engineering consultancy Basic Expert. The VBA has typically pushed complete removal of cladding,

"There are safe cost-effective rectification approaches which may mean leaving some cladding on a building, but that's okay," Dr Barnett said.

"Part of the VBA's problem is they're busy chasing building practitioners who might not have followed the letter of the law and they're using the cladding example as a means of catching these practitioners."

Planning Minister Richard Wynne said owners should have as much time as possible to pursue compensation.

"Apartment owners are in this situation through no fault of their own and it's only right they have as much time as possible to pursue compensation through the courts," Mr Wynne said.

"Cladding Safety Victoria is getting on with delivering our \$600 million world-first program to fix hundreds of buildings across Victoria with high-risk cladding."