

Flammable cladding on 75 buildings in Boroondara

Apartment owners and tenants across Boroondara could be living in potentially deadly fire traps due to combustibile cladding, but they're being kept in the dark about the risk.

Rebecca DiNuzzo, [Tom Minear](#) and Andrew Koubaridis, Progress Leader

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fire caused by a discarded cigarette butt resulted in extensive damage to the Lacrosse building in Docklands due to flammable cladding. Picture: Aaron Francis

The State Government should foot the bill to remove potentially deadly flammable cladding without any extra cost to taxpayers, according to Kew state Liberal MP Tim Smith.

Seventy-five buildings across Boroondara have been built using the hazardous material according to the [Victorian Building Authority](#), and 72 people died in London's Grenfell Tower in 2017 when a fire fuelled by combustibile cladding raged out of control.

Flammable cladding was also blamed for the quick spread of a fire at Melbourne's Lacrosse building in Docklands in 2014 in which no one was hurt.

Mr Smith said it was "ridiculous" a list of affected buildings was not made public by the government, and he said suburbs such as Hawthorn which had a large number of recently built high rise buildings were of particular concern.

"They argue it's an arson and terror risk (to reveal the addresses), which I say is ridiculous," Mr Smith said.

"I think the market deserves transparency, I think owners deserve transparency, I think buyers deserve transparency.

He slammed the VBA, the government's building regulator, for its "total failure" to vet the cladding used by builders, and he said 409 buildings reviewed across the state were deemed in the "highest risk" category.

While more than 1000 privately owned buildings across metropolitan Victoria have the cladding, according to the VBA.

Boroondara Council spokesman Shiran Wickramasinghe said combustible cladding was the State and Federal governments' responsibility to resolve in accordance with the National Construction Code.

He encouraged apartment buyers and owners to ask their owner's corporation and engage the services of a registered building practitioner if they had concerns about a building.

On October 29 it was revealed building [permit levies](#) on most apartment developments would be hiked up 640 per cent to pay for the State Government's [cladding removal program](#).

This could add to the cost of new builds, particularly apartment buildings, said Property Council state executive director Cressida Wall, and ultimately hurt homebuyer's hip pockets.

“(It) will capture a significant number of projects, especially those with multiple residences such as apartments. This will negatively impact residential supply and housing affordability,” she said.

The State Government did not respond by deadline to the *Progress Leader's* request for comment.

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