

The Sydney Morning Herald

NATIONAL NSW COMBUSTIBLE CLADDING CRISIS

Sydney cladding crisis would take \$1 billion to fix, strata body warns

By [Tom Rabe](#) and [Megan Gorrey](#)

July 18, 2019 – 7.30pm

The state's peak strata body organisation has warned that apartment owners will foot the bill for building defects unless the NSW government spends hundreds of millions to fix the "systemic crisis".

Strata Community Association NSW president Chris Duggan urged the Berejiklian government to match Victoria's commitment, which would cover half the estimated \$600 million cost of rectifying hundreds of high-risk buildings in that state and appeal for federal funding.



Sydney's city skyline. PETER BRAIG

But Mr Duggan estimated that \$1 billion was "a more appropriate figure" to remedy the more than 600 buildings affected by combustible cladding.

"Enough is enough at this point in time. We've got a systemic crisis at the moment across NSW with defects, cladding and issues that are all stacked against consumers," Mr Duggan said.

Mr Duggan said it did not matter whether the emergency funding package came from the state or federal government, but ultimately the "buck needs to stop at Gladys [Berejiklian]".

"This is a NSW issue, these are NSW-centric problems, these are buildings within her state."

The calls for government intervention come after freedom of information documents revealed dozens of well-known Sydney buildings contain flammable cladding material.

The documents show more than 340 buildings in the City of Sydney alone are listed on the state government's combustible cladding register.

More than 30 buildings in the city will have to have some or all of their cladding replaced, the documents show.

The Mantra on Kent and the 26-level office building 44 Market Street both require all of their cladding to be removed.

The Star Casino, the Australian Film Television and Radio School and the Pullman Hotel all require partial cladding removal.

The documents were obtained under the Government Information (Public Access) Act by Greens MP David Shoebridge, who described Sydney's current building situation as "a ticking time bomb".

He accused the NSW government of offloading the problem onto local councils.

"This is failed regulation by a government that refuses to take meaningful action. They have just handed the whole mess to local councils without providing any new resources or powers to fix it," Mr Shoebridge said.

"A number of these buildings are prominent public buildings including child care centres, student housing, shopping centres and sporting facilities – this goes well beyond private apartments and the public safety risk is obvious."

A spokesman for the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation Kevin Anderson said "creating hysteria will not deal with this issue".

"Finger pointing and playing the blame game will not deal with this issue. Practical steps are being taken by local councils to inspect buildings and implement possible remedies that may be needed which is the appropriate course of action," the spokesman said.

"Fire and Rescue NSW have notified all owners and occupants if their building requires an inspection."

The government established a Cladding Taskforce in June 2017 after the Grenfell Tower fire in London, where 72 people died.

That taskforce has reviewed 185,000 building projects since its creation, according to the NSW government.

Of the buildings reviewed, a further 4019 required an initial inspection, which was completed earlier this month. Almost 630 of those buildings have been identified by the taskforce as requiring “detailed assessment”, with more than 70 of them already cleared.

More than 150 of the buildings are considered to be “a priority for local councils”, according to the government spokesman.

Almost 20 of the buildings contained in the City of Sydney list are owned by the University of Sydney, while the multi-storey NSW Supreme Court Building is also named.



Tom Rabe



Tom Rabe is a journalist with The Sydney Morning Herald



Megan Gorrey



Megan Gorrey is the Urban Affairs reporter at the Sydney Morning Herald.
