

Residents all fired up by inaction over their flammable cladding concerns

A 70-apartment block at West Lakes has joined the Air Apartments battle for help to make their building safe from flammable cladding.



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Residents of a 70-apartment block at West Lakes have joined those at Air Apartments battling for help to make their building safe from flammable cladding.

The residents, who did not want their building identified, said Charles Sturt Council had demanded they foot the bill of several million dollars to do the work, even though council approved the now-banned cladding.

Chair of the Building Management Committee and former senator Mary Jo Fisher, 59, said the cost to each owner was between \$20,000 and \$95,000, depending on the size of their unit.

“We believe we deserve government assistance in the form of a grant,” she said.

“It is not fair to do it any other way. In what other circumstance would the law change and then you are expected to change your building yourself.”

Residents came forward after owners of units in Air Apartments in Eastwood expressed concerns with how Burnside Council and the state government had handled demands that they replace cladding at a cost to them of between \$50,000 and \$300,000.

Charles Sturt Council will not be providing financial relief to residents, and has refused to answer questions about the problem or say if other towers are affected.



Residents of Air Apartments, in Eastwood, have concerns about flammable cladding on the Apartment building. Picture: NCA NewsWire / Kelly Barnes

Flammable cladding came to global attention after being blamed for the deaths of 72 people in the London Grenfell Tower fire of 2017.

A state government audit in 2019 found dozens of Adelaide buildings were affected but their locations have mainly remained secret to avoid arson and terrorist attacks.

West Lakes unit owner Alan Stewart, 72, said there was no way he could find the \$20,000 needed to pay for his share of work at the apartment block.

“It has been the cause of a lot of frustration and anxiety”, he said.

Kuvern Kendle, 81, said he retired 15 years ago and could not come up with large sums of cash.

“Deep in my heart I don’t see why we should be responsible,” he said.

“We bought our units in good faith and trusted the council and state government had approved all the right checks.”

Peter Thompson, 80, said residents were suffering because Charles Sturt Council was applying rules more strictly than other councils.

“My problem with this is inconsistency between the councils. It should be the same statewide rules, for example if we were in the Adelaide City Council we would be in the clear,” he said.

Neil Evans, 63, said residents had already spent money on lawyers, expert opinion and an ongoing challenge in the courts.

“My problem is that the council just issues an edict to remove it and that is the end of it, with no help,” he said.

“I think that is morally wrong, especially as Adelaide City Council has changed their risk assessment to help their residents.”

Member for Bragg Jack Batty has collected 170 signatures on a petition calling on the government to provide zero-interest loans to residents to help solve the problem.

This option, adopted on Wednesday as official Opposition policy, has been rejected by the West Lakes residents.