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Hospitals still at risk from dangerous flammable cladding

Eight major Melbourne hospitals are still under threat from flammable cladding, which still hasn't been removed almost four years later.



Shannon Deery Exclusive [Follow](#)

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Flammable cladding, pictured at The Neo 200 apartment block in Spencer Street, has still not be removed from eight major Melbourne hospitals.

Flammable cladding has still not been removed from major Melbourne hospitals almost four years after being identified as non-compliant.

A 2017 audit of more than 1,100 health service building discovered non-compliant cladding on 18 public hospital buildings.

But the Sunday Herald Sun can reveal the dangerous cladding still hasn't been removed from eight major hospitals including the Royal Melbourne Hospital.

Other hospitals that remain a medium to high risk include Sunshine Hospital, Casey Hospital, the Monash Medical Centre, the Austin and Mercy Hospital for Women and Frankston Hospital.

The Department of Health and Human Services told a parliamentary inquiry COVID-19 restrictions forced rectification works to be stopped.

"All of the hospital buildings identified for replacement works are safe to occupy," the DHHS said in answers provided this week to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee probing the department's 2019-20 Financial and Performance Outcomes.

"No audit recommended an evacuation of the building. In all instances, remedial works and activities have been undertaken to reduce risk, for example, the installation of a cyclone fence, installation of sprinklers in undercroft, increasing perimeter patrols, removing motorcycle parking spaces along the external walls of buildings, and restricting the circumstances where hot works can be carried out to the external facade.

"Rectification works haven't been allowed to happen at Victorian hospital buildings for large parts of the past year due to the chief health officer's restrictions. We are hopeful to have works underway in the coming months, pending health advice."

Shadow Health Minister Georgie Crozier said delays in removing the cladding were not good enough.

"After years of warnings and serious incidents in Melbourne, it's not good enough that the Andrews Labor Government hasn't removed flammable cladding from many of our public hospitals, putting the lives of Victorians at risk," she said.

"These repeated warnings have been ignored. Many of the flammable cladding issues on these hospitals are around entry and exit points, potentially creating death traps.

"The Andrews Government was quick to remove flammable cladding from its own ministerial offices but when it comes to public hospitals and some of the most vulnerable Victorians it's placed in the too hard basket."

A government spokesperson said all of the hospital buildings identified for rectification works were safe to occupy.

“We have invested \$160 million for cladding rectification works on government buildings, with works on the highest risk buildings happening first,” she said.

“The Andrews Labor Government is the only government in the country addressing this worldwide problem, and we are getting on with this important work.”

The spokesperson said work to remove non-compliant cladding had been completed at seven public hospitals: the Royal Women’s Hospital; Werribee Mercy Hospital – Catherine McAuley Centre; University Hospital Geelong; Goulburn Valley Health – Shepparton Hospital; Northern Hospital inpatient unit tower; the north wing expansion at Royal Melbourne Hospital; and the Special Care Nursery building at Casey Hospital.

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