NSW CORONAVIRUS NEWS

Sydney COVID-19 quarantine hotels have potential fire safety faults

At least five Sydney COVID-19 quarantine hotels have been condemned as "potentially lethal buildings" after fire safety faults were found. One of the CBD's tallest hotels is also the subject of a combustible cladding investigation, it can be revealed.

Ben Pike, Urban Affairs Reporter, The Daily Telegraph   + Subscriber only | July 25, 2020 4:42pm

Sydney's COVID-19 quarantine hotels have been described as "potentially lethal buildings" because they are riddled with fire safety hazards.

Fire and Rescue NSW has identified at least five hotels as having problems including faulty fire detectors, fire exits without door handles, malfunctioning hydrants and fire alarms disabled due to maintenance work.

And, in what could potentially cost millions to repair, The Saturday Telegraph can also reveal the 45-storey Hilton Hotel on George St is under investigation by the City of Sydney council for having combustible cladding.

The Novotel Hotel could have possible fire safety hazards.

Other hotels affected, according to council documents published July 20, include the Novotel hotels in both Haymarket and Darling Harbour, the Hyatt Regency on Sussex St and Liv Apartments on Quay St, Haymarket.

A spokeswoman for Accor Pacific, owner of the two Novotel hotels, said "we have confirmation that both hotels are 100 per cent fire compliant".

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A spokesman for Liv Apartments said the issue - which related to a non-compliant access key for the hydrant booster assembly enclosure - was resolved May 18.

"We treat the safety of our people and tenants as the number one priority and we were fully compliant and functioning when FRNSW did their inspection and the only thing raised is a 003

key that the three (closest) brigades already have including a NMB key," the Liv Apartments spokesman said.

NSW Labor opposition leader Yasmin Catley said the problem should have been dealt with months ago.

"The very least the government should have done is checked that these buildings were fire safe before quarantining hundreds of potentially unwell people inside for weeks and weeks at a time," she said.

"The worrying thing is that these fire safety compliance orders can't be rectified until the quarantined people are removed because of the risk of exposure for tradespeople.

"That means hundreds of people are in potentially lethal buildings which aren't up to code for fire safety or evacuation."

A government source said the defects increased the chances of infectious people in quarantine spilling out onto the street in the event of a fire.

The fire safety reports were prompted after the state government ordered checks of the hotels to ensure their appropriateness for quarantining returned travellers.

During the checks they also found the Rendezvous Studio Hotel Sydney Central does not have a fire sprinkler system on levels 3-13 and is riddled with other fire hazards.

COVID-19 Australian Statistics

New Cases Today
375

Active Cases
4,576

357	15	1	0	1	1	0	0	3,934	617	5	14	2	1	1	2
VIC	NSW	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	VIC	NSW	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT

Confirmed
13,773

Recovered
9,052

Deaths
145

Cases / Deaths

VIC	7762 / 61	NSW	3465 / 49	QLD	1073 / 6	WA	654 / 9	SA	447 / 4
TAS	227 / 13	ACT	113 / 3	NT	32 / 0				

World Statistics ⊙

Source - World Health Organization, Australian Government, AAP, Reuters, Johns Hopkins, other media

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That hotel remains closed and has not been used for returned traveller quarantine.

A City of Sydney spokeswoman said that in general, fire safety deficiencies can be the result in part of changing building code requirements, fire incidents exposing fire system shortfalls, poor housekeeping practices or simply an aged building that is in need of a fire safety upgrade.

"However, the City often finds noncompliance issues are related to lack of essential fire safety equipment such as smoke alarms, firefighting equipment or appropriate fire exits," she said.

Hilton Sydney general manager Ronald Van-Weezel the fire hydrant issue was rectified on June 24.

"In addition, Hilton Sydney is currently working closely with Sydney City Council to investigate the cladding matter further," he said.

"Hilton Sydney is currently not hosting any quarantine guests."

A NSW Treasury spokesman said the NSW Government "is committed to ensuring the safety of guests in hotel quarantine as we continue to protect the community from further spread of COVID-19".

"All hotels licenced to operate in NSW must comply with relevant fire safety standards and all venues taking part in the hotel quarantine program have been assessed as safe," he said.