

VIC NEWS

Disciplinary action stalls after Lacrosse tower fire as state's cladding crisis continues

It has been almost five years since the Lacrosse tower cladding fire which sparked the state's cladding crisis, yet the men embroiled in the scandal are free to work as their disciplinary proceedings stall.

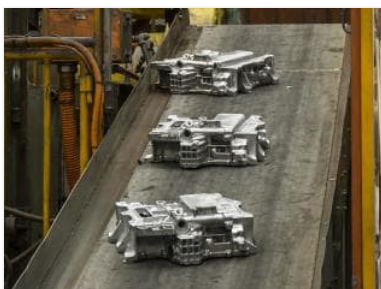
Ellen Whinnett, Exclusive, Sunday Herald Sun

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Almost five years after the [Lacrosse tower fire](#) which ignited [Victoria's cladding crisis](#), disciplinary action against two men who approved the building works remains unresolved.

No date has been set for building surveyor Anastasios Galanos and fire safety engineer Con Nicolas to have their disciplinary proceedings before the Victorian Building Authority finalised.

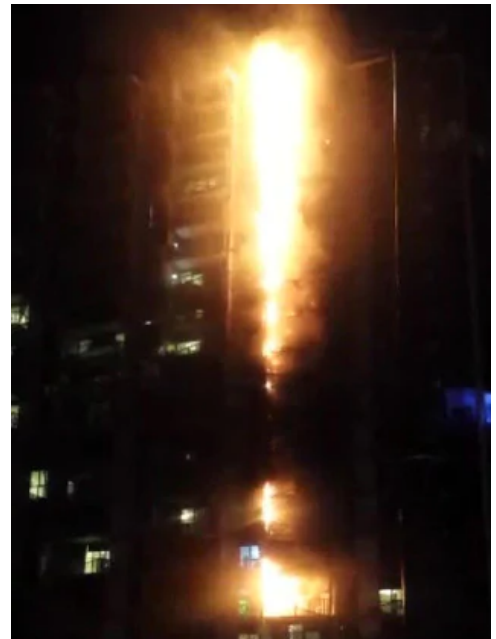
Their cases have been deferred numerous times since they were referred for action in 2016. The men are able to continue working while their case is unresolved.

The Lacrosse builder, LU Simon director Jim Moschoyiannis, was found guilty in November of failing to comply with sections of the Building Act, and handed a reprimand and a \$54,000 fine.

He was found, in his capacity as the registered building practitioner for LU Simon, to have installed Alucobest aluminium cladding on the Lacrosse building which did not comply with building code standards. LU Simon is replacing the cladding on the tower.



Charred balconies at the Lacrosse Tower in Docklands.



The fire occurred nearly five years ago.

Mr Galanos, a private building surveyor who issued the permit for the Lacrosse tower, is alleged to have breached the Building Act and Regulations by failing to carry out his work in a competent manner and to a professional standard.

The Victorian Building Authority alleges he could not have been satisfied that the building work on the Lacrosse tower would comply with the Building Act and Regulations when he issued the building permit.

Mr Nicolas, who deemed the building fire compliant, is facing six allegations including that he failed to carry out work as a registered builder in a competent manner and to a professional standard, and that he failed to identify aluminium composite cladding had been installed on the tower when he determined it was compliant.

The three men are the first to face official sanctions as a result of the widespread use in Australia of non-compliant, flammable cladding.



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The Grenfell Tower tragedy in London killed 72 people. Picture: Natalie Oxford

The disciplinary matters against them followed the terrifying fire at the Lacrosse building in La Trobe Street in November 2014.

Sparked by an improperly discarded cigarette on a balcony, the fire raced through the composite cladding and spread rapidly up the building, leading to the evacuation of more than 400 residents, and revealing a major problem with non-compliant cladding fitted to hundreds of buildings across Victoria.

The crisis deepened in June 2017 when aluminium composite cladding ignited on the Grenfell Tower in London, sparking a massive fire which killed 72 people and bringing worldwide attention to the dangers posed by the combustible panels.

The non-completion of the case against the two men continues two years after the Victorian Cladding

Taskforce complained about the delays in its interim report in November 2017, saying: “We are concerned by the long period of time it has taken for these disciplinary proceedings to be dealt with and the fact that they are still not complete.”



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The *Sunday Herald Sun* asked the Victorian Building Authority why there had been such a delay and when the men's cases would finish.

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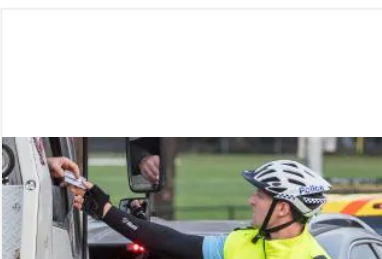
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The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning responded, saying it was “clarifying governance arrangements for the Building Practitioners Board to ensure all outstanding cases can be finalised.” The department could not say when the men's cases might finish.

The Victorian Building Authority subsumed the Building Practitioners Board in 2016.

The Government last month announced a \$600 million fund to replace non-compliant cladding on building in Victoria, with Premier Daniel Andrews





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also flagging changes to allow for speedier conclusions to disciplinary proceedings.

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