

POLITICS VICTORIA **CLADDING CRISIS**

# Cladding removal scheme sped up to help keep tradies 'on the tools'

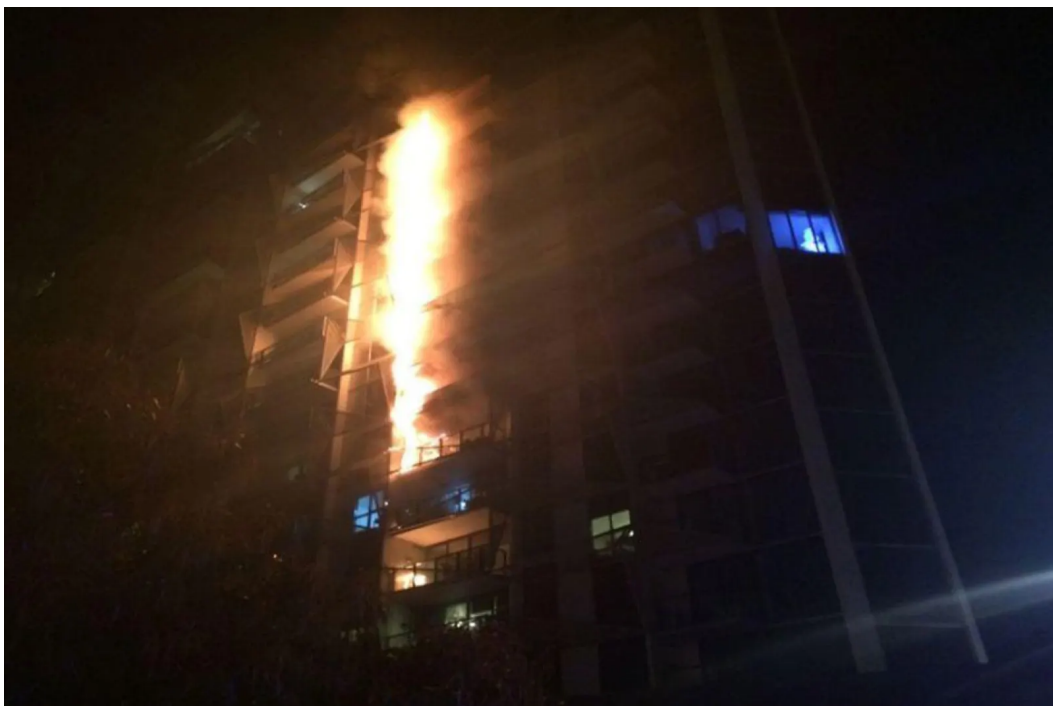
By [Clay Lucas](#)

June 23, 2020 – 6.00pm

10 [View all comments](#)

In a bid to create more work for Victorian builders, the Andrews government will accelerate the removal of dangerous flammable cladding from apartments across the state.

Over the past two decades, thousands of buildings across Australia have been built with cladding which after a series of fires both locally and internationally, has been found to be highly flammable.



Fire tears up the side of Dockland's Lacrosse building in 2014. The fire prompted a review of flammable cladding on apartments.

The state government is spending \$600 million to fix the cladding on private apartments and had planned to fund repair works on up to 100 buildings a year.

On Tuesday Planning Minister Richard Wynne announced this workload would double, in order to help keep builders afloat and revive an economy stalled by the coronavirus pandemic.

An initial 15 buildings were selected to be fixed by the government. After lengthy delays in starting, seven are now being repaired.

Government agency Cladding Safety Victoria has selected a group of builders and construction experts that will be able to rectify hundreds more projects around Melbourne and in a handful in regional areas.



The same flammable cladding on Lacrosse was on London's Grenfell Tower (pictured). The public housing tower caught fire in 2017, killing 72 people. AP

Builders must have no significant disciplinary action against them if they are to get work.

Construction expert Sahil Bhasin from consultants Roscon, which advises owners on cladding issues, said this was not good enough because many builders responsible for apartment towers with cladding problems had still not faced any scrutiny.

“I’m not aware of any prosecutions of businesses that have been involved in buildings with flammable cladding,” Mr Bhasin said.

“So they are going to get the people who caused the problem being paid to fix the problem.”

He said instead that any builder involved in an apartment block that had wound up on a statewide audit of cladding done by the government should be banned from doing work for the government.

Leaked documents reveal concerns over hundreds of sites as the Government refuses to say which taxpayer-owned buildings could at risk due to flammable cladding.

---

### Get our Morning & Evening Edition newsletters

The most important news, analysis and insights delivered to your inbox at the start and end of each day. [Sign up here.](#)

---



**Clay Lucas**



Clay Lucas is a senior reporter for The Age. Clay has worked at The Age since 2005, covering urban affairs, transport, state politics, local government and workplace relations for The Age and Sunday Age.



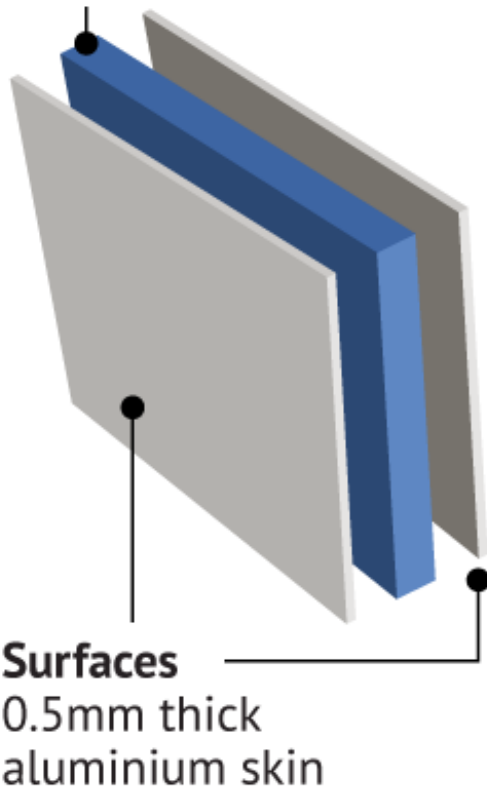
“That will take out all of these people who caused this problem in one go,” he said.

But Mr Wynne said that only reputable builders would be eligible for the accelerated rectification works.

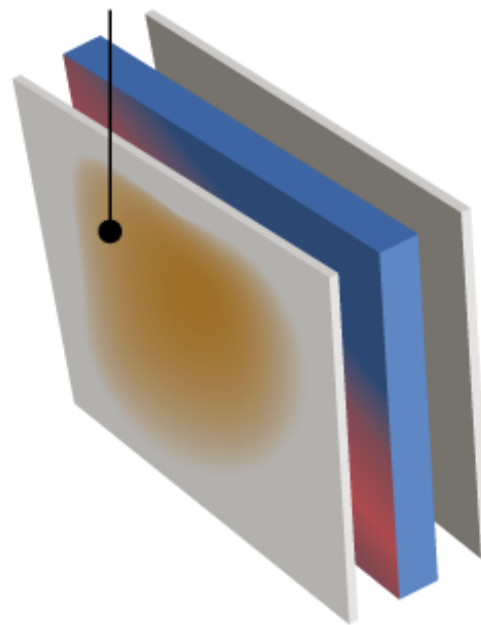
“Those found to have done the wrong thing will not be able to participate,” Mr Wynne said.

## Aluminium composite cladding panel Flammable core

**Insulating core**  
2-5mm thick,  
100% polyethylene



Heat from a fire will  
conduct quickly to the  
core through thin  
aluminium



Core loses  
bind, causing  
skins to de-  
laminat



*Graphic: Jamie Brown*

“This is a chance for the original builders to become part of the solution and keep their workers employed during these challenging times.”

Cladding Safety Victoria chief executive Dan O’Brien said the move was necessary because of the massive impact of coronavirus on the construction industry.

“We want to keep builders on the tools throughout these uncertain times,” he said. “This way we are getting money into the market faster and bringing forward cladding removal.”

“We’re doing what we can to support jobs,” he said.