

# Anger at cladding inaction by NSW government

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NICHOLAS JENSEN REPORTER

10:29PM JULY 25, 20217 COMMENTS



Thousands of residents across NSW have been left exposed to the danger of a Grenfell Tower-style inferno as the taskforce set up to remove flammable materials has yet to rectify a single high-risk property since it was established more than a year and half ago.

The Australian can reveal the location of 241 residential buildings listed on the government's high-risk register by Local Government Area, showing a concentration of high-risk buildings across the Inner West, Parramatta, Canterbury-Bankstown and the City of Sydney LGAs.

As of July 8, the City of Sydney holds 22 per cent of all high-risk residential buildings in the state (54), followed by the City of Parramatta with 11 per cent (26), with scores of other high-risk buildings in the Bayside, Ryde and Waverley LGAs also identified as requiring urgent rectification work.

While the complete register of high-risk buildings has been deemed a security risk by NSW police – with specific residential addresses to remain secret – new documents show the cladding crisis encompasses more than 80 postcodes and 25 LGAs across the state.

With affected residents living in fear of a repeat of London's Grenfell Tower blaze in June 2017 — when a fire in a kitchen raced up the exterior of the 23-storey building, killing 72 people — the NSW Cladding Taskforce continues to lag, with crucial remediation work not expected to begin until the end of this year.

In April 2020, a parliamentary inquiry concluded the response of the NSW government had been “wholly inadequate” in trying to prevent a Grenfell-like disaster in NSW, arguing similar combustible materials — including Aluminium Composite Panels — continue to pose grave threats for residents

“We do not want a Grenfell Tower crisis here in NSW before the government is forced to take meaningful action,” it said.

<b>FIRE-RISK BUILDINGS BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA</b>	
10 Bayside Council	4 Ku-ring-gai Council
1 City of Campbelltown	2 Lane Cove Council
3 City of Canada Bay	8 Municipality of Burwood
14 City of Canterbury-Bankstown	2 Municipality of Mosman
6 City of Liverpool	5 Municipality of Strathfield
26 City of Parramatta	2 Municipality of Woollahra
1 City of Randwick	9 Newcastle
14 City of Ryde	10 North Sydney Council
54 City of Sydney Council	5 Northern Beaches Council
4 City of Willoughby	4 Sutherland Shire
7 Cumberland City Council	6 The Hills Shire

The NSW government has since committed to a \$139m three-year loan scheme designed to assist owners in the removal of dangerous cladding, but critics have lampooned the pace of the scheme.

“I’m satisfied the final remediation standards, if they are ever implemented, will be safe but the whole process has been inexcusably delayed,” said Greens MP David Shoebridge. “We are now four years after the Grenfell tragedy and the NSW Coalition has not remediated a single building. We desperately need an industry-wide focus on flammable cladding.”

Research published by RMIT estimates the scale of the cladding crisis covers more than 3400 “at-risk” residential buildings across Australia, with remediation costs for individual properties ranging from \$30,000 to \$12m, depending on the scope of the work.

Trivess Moore, who co-wrote the research, said while the NSW government had established a strong support package for owners, it had been too slow in conducting remediation work. “The issue is urgent and complex, but I think Project Remediate has been too slow to react and underestimated the process of rectification and the further complications that it can uncover,” he said.

“We have people living in these high-risk buildings who genuinely fear for their safety and remain confused about the financial supports open to them.”

NSW Building Commissioner David Chandler insists the project is making good headway. “This has been a complex project involving lengthy negotiations, including the Insurance Council of Australia and other funding bodies ... We’ve wanted to take our time to get the design right before we begin and that has taken some time,” he said.

“It’s taken some time to design and I would’ve loved to have started six months ago, but we want to present a plan that will have everybody home and safe and which rebuilds consumer confidence.”