

POLITICS VICTORIA **CLADDING CRISIS**

# Builders to blame for bad cladding will now be chased through courts

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By [Clay Lucas](#), [Benjamin Preiss](#) and [Charlotte Grieve](#)

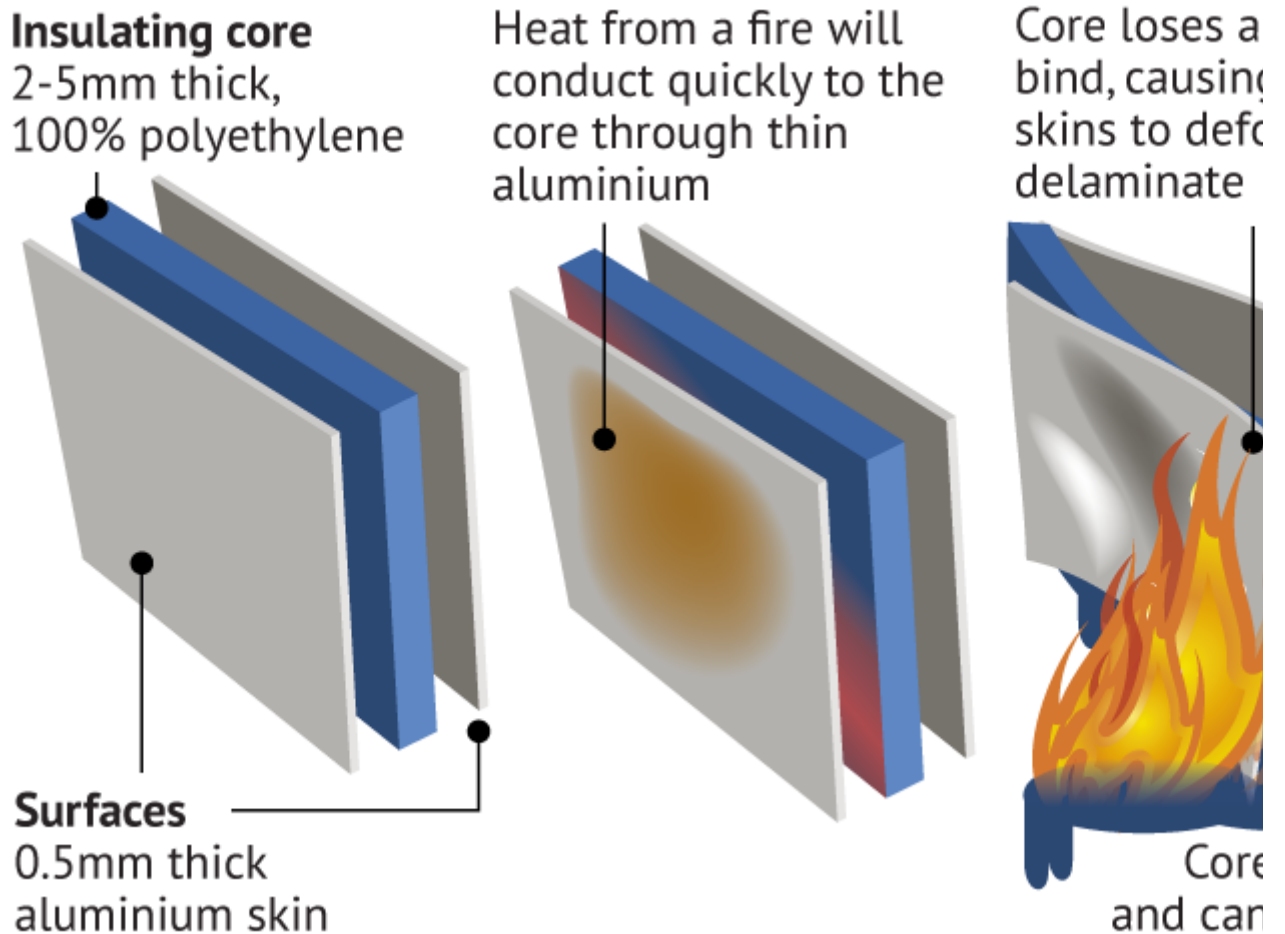
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Builders responsible for installing dangerous cladding will be pursued through the courts under new laws, the state government says.

Under the new laws announced by Planning Minister Richard Wynne on Tuesday the state government will be able to pursue builders through the courts on behalf of owners corporations if the state pays to rectify the dangerous cladding.

## Aluminium composite cladding panel Flammable core



*Graphic: Jamie Brown*

In July, the Andrews government announced a \$600 million package to fund the removal of dangerous cladding from more than 500 buildings identified as being at high risk of fire.

On Tuesday, Mr Wynne said that while none of this rectification work had yet begun, the government expected to replace the cladding on 100 buildings each year over five years.

Fifteen apartments have been identified as the first to be fixed under this fund with work to begin by the end of the year.

A new agency, Cladding Safety Victoria, has also been set up to oversee the repairs.

“Some of the buildings are fully clad, some are only clad in part. There will be different solutions depending on the situation of each building,” Mr Wynne said.

Mr Wynne said the state government had now audited more than 2500 buildings, with one fifth now identified as being “at risk”.

An [economic analysis](#) released in August found the bill for rectifying the national cladding crisis could soar into the billions of dollars. But Mr Wynne was confident

the \$600 million figure – partly raised by a new levy to be paid by developers on multi-storey buildings valued at more than \$800,000 – was suitable.

“It’s not just a starting point,” Mr Wynne said.

He called on the federal government to tighten import restrictions on building products, and also identified phoenixing – where companies liquidate to avoid paying creditors, then reappear in a new guise – as a major problem in the construction industry.

“It requires a national response,” Mr Wynne said. “We will continue to advocate for the Commonwealth to step up and support the Victorian government.”

When asked if the Victorian Building Authority was doing its job properly, Mr Wynne heaped praise upon them, saying they were doing “an excellent job”. He said the authority had ramped up efforts to audit building sites for compliance.

“Now 10 per cent of all works that are being done are being inspected.”



Premier Daniel Andrews and Planning Minister Richard Wynne when they announced the \$600 million cladding fund in July. AAP

Earlier this year the authority suspended a rogue building surveyor with a history of shoddy approvals, including five apartment blocks with combustible cladding.

Kamran Zand Basiri issued an occupancy permit for a Frankston South apartment block now considered among the state’s most urgent priority for repairs due to its flammable cladding.

He also racked up \$60,000 in fines for projects in Dandenong and Noble Park between 2015 and 2017.

Mr Basiri has denied wrongdoing and insisted he complied with regulations at the time he provided approvals.

The government announced the VBA has now suspended two other builders and surveyors and issued nine show cause notices over dangerous cladding.

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