



Residents return after guts Melbourne building

VIC NEWS

Victorian Building Authority put in charge of cladding crackdown on 283 high-risk buildings

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March 19, 2019 8:00pm

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EXCLUSIVE: Councils have been stripped of the responsibility to ensure dangerous building materials are removed from hundreds of apartment complexes in a bid to fast-track the city’s response to the cladding crisis.

The *Herald Sun* can reveal urgent works to remove cladding from 283 buildings — deemed to be high risk in a statewide audit — will now be overseen by the Victorian Building Authority.

But it may take up to two years for people's homes to be made completely safe, as pressure mounts on the state government to provide financial assistance to property owners facing huge bills for rectification works.

OWNERS FACE TWO-YEAR WAIT FOR CLADDING TO GO

GRENFELL EXPERT CALLS FOR GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

It comes as new figures show Melbourne's inner north is the epicentre of the state's cladding catastrophe, with 145 of 681 problem-plagued buildings located in Moreland — more than double any other local government area.

There are another 64 privately-owned buildings with dodgy cladding in the City of Melbourne, 59 in Port Phillip, 55 in Monash, 41 in Stonnington, 35 in Glen Eira and 30 in Dandenong.

While local councils have been responsible for overseeing rectification works, Planning Minister Richard Wynne quietly moved last Friday to appoint the VBA as the municipal building surveyor for 283 buildings.

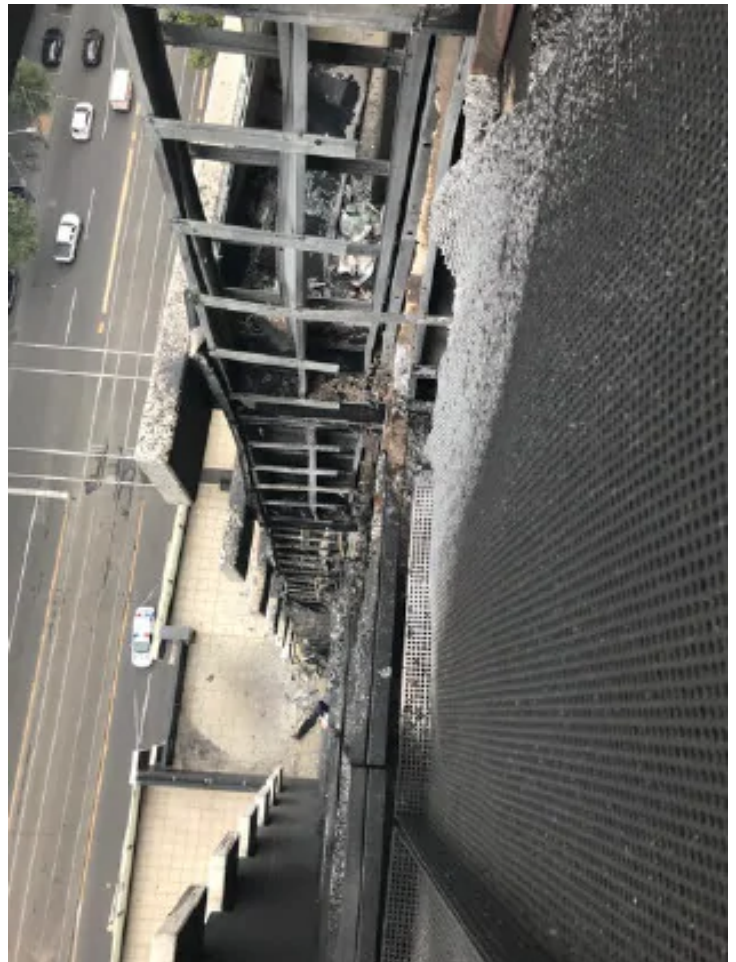
The VBA was already overseeing the 44 most at-risk buildings — but has said work to remove cladding from these properties “may take around two years to fix”.


Opposition planning spokesman Tim Smith said cladding was “a ticking time bomb” and that residents had “a right to know” whether their homes were affected.

“There are literally hundreds of buildings around the state that are fire traps — people's homes aren't safe, and all we get is bureaucratic buck passing from this Labor government,” Mr Smith said.

A VBA spokeswoman said the authority's building experts would assist owners with rectification works and “ensure a consistent and appropriate process is delivered across all the affected buildings in Victoria”.

“The VBA will continue to work closely with local government, to identify other examples of combustible cladding on buildings in the community,” she said.



 Fire damage at the Neo200 building, which had dodgy cladding. Picture: MFB

Sustainable Australia MP Clifford Hayes said it was a “travesty” that the government had allowed rogue developers to cut corners and put “the lives of residents at risk”.

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Moreland City Council acting future cities director Phillip Priest said the high number of buildings with dodgy cladding in the area — covering suburbs including Brunswick, Coburg and Pascoe Vale — was due to the high growth rate in residential apartment development.

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