

Extended wait to get flammable cladding removed from hundreds of buildings

Work to remove flammable cladding in more than 200 NSW buildings still has not started, despite multiple buildings in Victoria having it removed.



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@angirab_ 2 min read October 10, 2021 - 8:29PM



Sky News host Peta Credlin says here in Australia we have our own "cladding crisis" with more than "three thousand" buildings still at risk from a potential inferno similar to London's Grenfell Tower blaze of 2017. "Millions of dollars were promised, to fix it, but it still hasn't happened, according to an expert report," Ms Credlin...

Planning authorities in Victoria have removed flammable cladding from 40 private buildings, while all of NSW's more than 200 high-risk apartment towers are still waiting for government help.

The drawn-out process for assistance in NSW has prompted some apartment owners to fix the risk on their own without waiting for the government to fund the costly repairs.

As of 30 June 2021, the Victorian government has removed flammable cladding from 40 private residential buildings. Work on a further 117 buildings are under way, latest figures show.

But NSW has not started remediation work on any of the approximately 220 high-risk residential buildings that contain flammable cladding.



NSW Building Commissioner David Chandler says he expects the program to remove the cladding to be finished on time. Picture: AAP Image

Work on the first building – a residential complex in the Inner West – won't start until the end of the month.

NSW Building Commissioner David Chandler said Project Remediate — the three-year program that provides building owners with low interest loans to fix their properties — was delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Mr Chandler said he was confident the project would be finished by its three-year deadline and that Victorian authorities had started their own project “without the full exposure (of risk) being clear”.

“Both our approaches are different,” he said. “They committed to the project with less line-of-sight than we have.

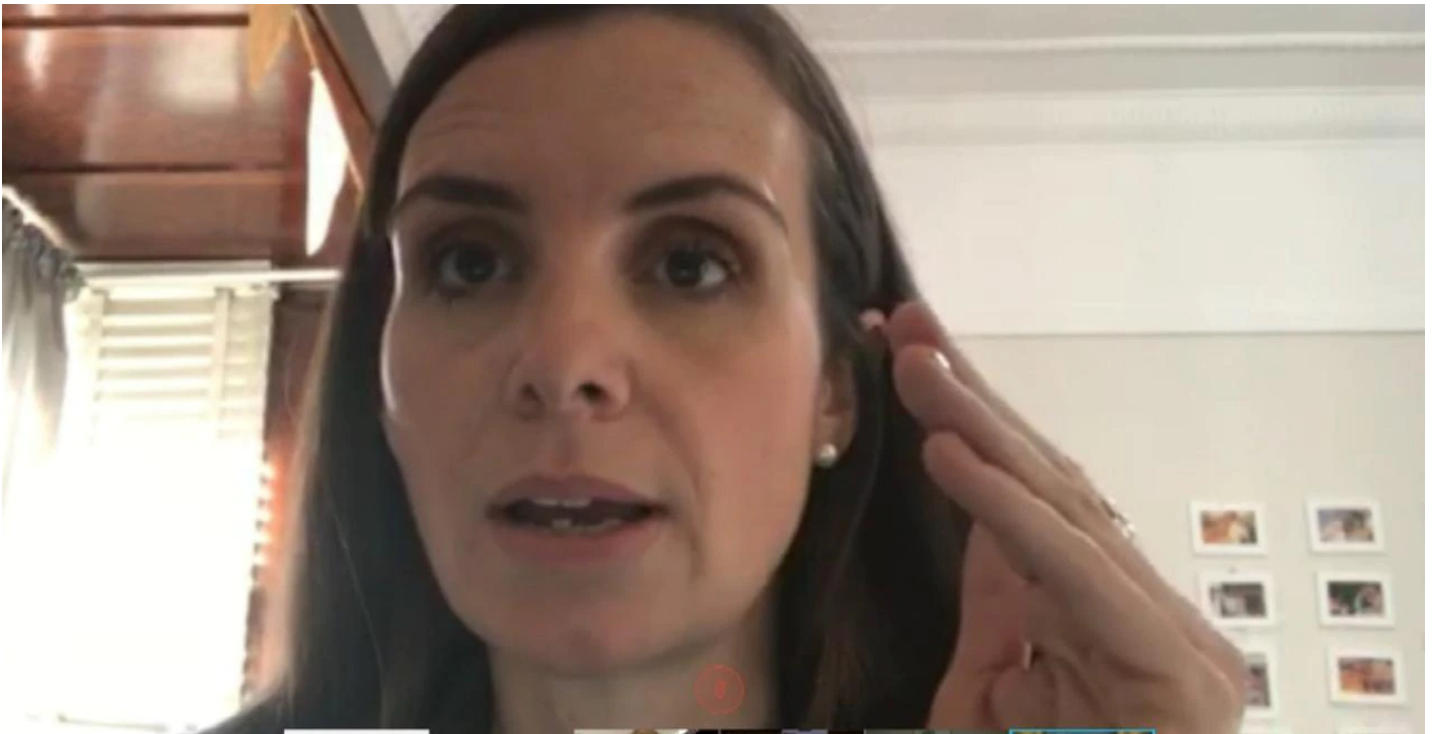
“There is a significant cost blowout in Victoria.

“That is an unacceptable outcome in NSW.”

Industry members will be grilled at a parliamentary hearing today where building owners will make submissions about the impact of the delayed process.

Among the submissions is one from an apartment complex that was asked by the City of Sydney Council to repair the flammable cladding and is now stuck in a binding contract that prevents them from joining the support package.

“To join Project Remediate would mean that we would have to scrap all our work and the fees paid to consultants and experts to date (approximately \$100,000), and start again with consultants and experts nominated by the Building Commissioner,” the submission said.



Shadow Better Regulation Minister Courtney Houssos says there is too much red tape. Picture: Supplied

Shadow Minister for Better Regulation Courtney Houssos said the government's process for removing flammable cladding was wrapped in red tape.

"Project Remediate punishes apartment owners who did the right thing and acted quickly to address the fire risk. Under the NSW government's program, the faster you act the less support you get," she said.

"The fire risks in a badly designed building is not going to be fixed by a badly designed government program."