

The Sydney Morning Herald

NATIONAL NSW DEVELOPMENT OUTRAGE

Building report author says NSW government should fund cladding fix

By [Megan Gorrey](#)

August 27, 2019 – 6.48pm



The co-author of a landmark report into Australia's building regulations says the NSW construction industry is in "crisis" and the Berejiklian government should fund a fix for flammable cladding.

Lawyer Bronwyn Weir and former senior public servant Peter Shergold recommended 24 urgent reforms to [lift the standards of residential construction](#) in a report that was handed to state governments last February.



A parliamentary committee is scrutinising the NSW building industry after a string of unit blocks were evacuated due to safety concerns. KATE GERAGHTY, NICK MOIR, BROOK MITCHELL

Ms Weir told a parliamentary inquiry into the state's building industry on Tuesday that the report's recommendations had focused "on the top of the cliff, and how do we make buildings better?".

But since the report was handed down, Ms Weir said there had been "some pretty catastrophic" building failures, including the cracked Opal Tower and Mascot Towers.

"The question has turned clearly to what we do at the bottom of the cliff," she said. "We really are in quite a crisis."

Ms Weir and Mr Shergold said in their submissions that the NSW government had failed to act on the majority of their recommendations. The government says it will implement those proposals.

When asked if she was confident the suggestions would be implemented within the recommended three-year timeframe, Ms Weir said the government was "moving in the right direction".

Ms Weir said the government's lack of response to the recommendations so far was "pretty typical of all the states and territories".

When the inquiry's chairman, Greens MP David Shoebridge, asked Ms Weir if she considered that response to be "pretty bad" or disappointing, she said: "We gave them three years. It's typical. Does that mean all the states and territories are disappointing? Perhaps."

Ms Weir said she had been contracted by the government on Monday to provide about 10 days of work to help the NSW Building Commissioner, David Chandler, improve construction regulations.

"I don't fully understand the scope [of my position]," she said.

Ms Weir, who was an adviser to the Victorian Cladding Taskforce, was also questioned as to whether the NSW government should provide funding to help remedy the state's unfolding flammable cladding crisis. The Victorian government has promised \$600 million to help fix the problem.

"My own personal view has been that governments need to pick up the tab. I agree with what Victoria has done," she said.

"I think the federal government has just as much interest in the solution to this as the states."

Mr Chandler previously said he would [recommend direct support for apartment owners](#) facing significant defects or large bills to remove dangerous cladding, possibly including low-interest government loans.

Engineers Australia's public affairs manager Jonathan Russell told the inquiry that a lack of registration requirements for engineers in NSW meant there was "no



Lawyer Bronwyn Weir says she agrees with the Victorian government's \$600 million funding package to help fix the dangerous cladding crisis.

mechanism in place" for removing engineers from practice who had been struck off in Victoria and Queensland.

Mr Russell said those banned engineers often ended up working in NSW, prompting Mr Shoebridge to ask if the state had become a "last refuge of scoundrels".

"Yes, that's right," Mr Russell said.

Master Builders NSW executive director Brian Seidler hoped the appointment of a building commissioner was the "first step" towards an independent building commission.

He called for licensing requirements to extend to architects, designers and engineers, continued professional development for tradespeople and a dedicated building industry minister.

Development and Environmental Professionals' Association secretary Anthony Roberts said the union was "steadfastly opposed" to anyone outside local government certifying buildings.

"The system can only work effectively and better by returning it to local government," he said.



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