

## VIC NEWS


# Neo200 tower still has dangerous cladding, despite flags raised one year ago

A year on from the revelation the Neo200 apartment tower was coated in dangerous cladding and owners are tired of being kept in the dark about rectification works.

Tom Minear and Monique Hore, Sunday Herald Sun

 Subscriber only | February 2, 2020 8:00am



 Balconies cluttered with combustible materials and airconditioners covered at neighbouring building to the Neo200 fire building. Picture: Jason Edwards

Dangerous cladding that fuelled a high-rise fire in Melbourne's CBD still hasn't been removed.

A year since flames shot up the [Neo200 tower](#) on Spencer St, igniting the city's cladding crisis, a *Sunday Herald Sun* investigation has found as many as 20 residents still can't return to their apartments.

The building manager is checking balconies weekly to reduce fire risk.

The *Sunday Herald Sun* can reveal a funding agreement to [take down the cladding](#) has been struck between the Neo200 owners' corporation and Cladding Safety Victoria.



📷 The balcony on the 26th floor of Neo200 building on Spencer Street. Picture: Metropolitan Fire Brigade



📷 Balconies cluttered with combustible materials and airconditioners covered at Neo200 fire building. Picture: Jason Edwards

But work cannot begin until apartments damaged in the fire are repaired.

Melbourne City Council’s municipal building surveyor warned the owners’ corporation on Christmas Eve that it needed to comply with a building order to fix the apartments and remove the cladding — or face thousands of dollars in fines.

The corporation had until Friday to [obtain permits for the repair works](#). It’s understood a contract with a builder was locked in just before the deadline.

Minutes from an owners’ corporation meeting last May stated a builder would be starting works “within weeks”. It is understood the delays are linked to the owners’ corporation switching management companies and lawyers, and struggling to negotiate the cost of the repairs with their insurer.

The MFB, which is still finalising its report into the blaze, had warned of [major risks](#) at Neo200 before the fire.

Along with flammable cladding, balconies were crammed with residents' belongings and rubbish, and when a cigarette ignited the fire there were issues with alarms and sprinklers.

A council building order issued to Neo200 requires damaged apartments to be fixed by June, with all cladding gone by October.



📷 Balconies at the Neo200 apartment building were stocked with flammable material. Picture: Jason Edwards

Cladding Safety Victoria chief Dan O'Brien said his agency's work to take down the cladding would start as soon as the damage was fixed.

Residents told the *Sunday Herald Sun* they felt left in the dark.

Owner-occupier Bassem Abousaid said "the information has been a bit thin" and "meaningful updates" were needed to keep residents informed of rectification works.

Another owner who moved back last July after their apartment suffered water damage wants the cladding gone.

"We should be informed about what is going on," the owner said.

"It has been one year, it has been a long time."

#### **MORE NEWS:**

Another owner who bought a barbecue had used it only once for fear it could spark another fire.

"I was so nervous about the building going up in flames that I have put it back in storage," he said.

"You are mindful that you are still living in a death trap."

A Melbourne City Council spokeswoman said it could prosecute the owners' corporation if it failed to comply with the building order.

[tom.minear@news.com.au](mailto:tom.minear@news.com.au)