



Property Residential Combustible cladding crisis

— Exclusive

Victoria's 'high-risk' buildings will rise over 500

Michael Bleby *Senior Reporter*

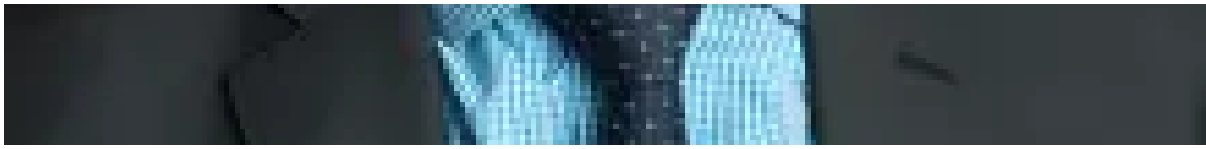


Aug 29, 2019 — 6.00pm



Victoria faces a higher cladding rectification bill as the number of private buildings found to have "high risk" combustible cladding will rise to more than 500, said Dan O'Brien, the head of the state's new cladding rectification body.





Expecting the number of high-risk residential buildings to rise over 1000: Cladding Safety Victoria head Dan O'Brien. **Supplied**

The state's cladding taskforce deems 406 private residential buildings – out of the 793 private residential buildings found to have combustible cladding on them – to be "high-risk".

Not all buildings with combustible cladding on them carry the same level of risk and some are classed as medium- or low-risk.

But the number of "high-risk" buildings – the ones needing rectification and the ones on which his agency focuses – will rise, Mr O'Brien said in his first public comments since [being appointed](#) to head Cladding Safety Victoria.

"That number of 406 keeps on growing," he told a Property Council of Australia seminar on Thursday.

On Friday in a speech to the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors, Mr O'Brien corrected his comments that the number of 406 high-risk buildings would rise above 1000.

"It was my error," Mr O'Brien said. "That figure of 793 will continue to go up. It will go beyond 1000. The number of problem projects, the 406, will also go up. But where it lands is difficult for me to know at this stage. It will certainly be north of 500. And that's because the audit continues. The audit's got a couple of years to run."

On Thursday, Mr O'Brien said he could not say how much more it would cost beyond the \$600 million the state government has set aside for the task.

"It's a fair question, but it's one I can't answer at this point in time," he said.

"We need to understand the risk coefficient – the funding needed to reduce risk at a point in time and we don't have that now. We'll have a far greater understanding of that in the next 12 months."

Mr O'Brien said rectification would not necessarily mean replacing cladding, but aimed to make buildings safe, by focusing on "performance" measures, such as whether a building had other measures that could reduce risks to life in the event of fire and could be safely evacuated.

As each building was a different structure, each would likely need an individually-designed solution. Cladding Safety Victoria [CSV] is working through a "pilot" crop of 15 buildings that would help it develop cost templates and ways of approaching rectification, he said.

Mr O'Brien also said the rectification process would only focus on cladding and not on other building defects.

CSV was going to direct work to contractors who could demonstrate they could do the job well. The Victorian Building Authority was drafting guidelines for cladding rectification processes and these would include correct disposal of waste material, Mr O'Brien said.

"This stuff is flammable," he said. "It should be considered in the same category as asbestos. The disposal of this waste has to be done properly. That will be a key condition of [any] agreement we enter into."

Correction: This version of the story corrects Thursday's version in which Mr O'Brien said the number of high-risk buildings would double to more than 1000. He corrected himself in a subsequent speech on Friday.



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