

# Building surveyors claim Victorian councils are failing legal obligations on safety checks

Building surveyors say many Victorian councils are failing their legal obligations on building defects — leading to serious risks — but the councils says it's the government's fault.



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Building surveyors tasked with identifying combustible cladding and other building defects say most Victorian councils are failing their legal obligations, leading to serious risks to the community.

But the Municipal Association of Victoria has slammed the Andrews government over new laws it says throw councils under a bus.

Research by the Australian Services Union has found municipal building surveyors are under growing pressure.

Tensions are rising in the industry, with the Herald Sun last month revealing a peak institute of surveyors had lashed the [Victorian Building Authority](#), saying the VBA had completely lost its confidence.

Among surveyors interviewed by the ASU across 44 councils, 85 per cent said their council “sometimes” met its legal obligations and time frames for surveying work.

Most surveyors, who are tasked with ensuring buildings are safe from defects, said failure to meet these legal requirements presented a serious danger to the public

ASU state secretary Lisa Darmanin said [short staffing and heavy workloads](#) meant services struggled to keep up.



Research by the Australian Services Union has found -municipal building surveyors are under growing pressure. Picture: Getty Images

“Municipal building surveying departments need immediate attention from councils and the Victorian government so they can redevelop the capacity to complete all their important work in the statutory timelines,” Ms Darmanin said.

“According to the people who know – municipal building surveyors and deputy building surveyors – the situation in council building surveying departments is not getting better, it’s getting worse.”

The union called for the planning minister to set up a municipal building control reference group, provide dedicated funding and force councils to improve the sector.

But councils accuse the state government of making the problem worse.

New laws before the Victorian parliament would require surveyors to perform extra inspections once building construction was completed.

The peak body for councils, the MAV, lashed the proposal as unworkable.

President David Clark said it would take several years before there were enough employees to support the laws.

“Once again having not being able to make the system work, the Victorian government has chosen to make local government responsible and their residents pay,” he said.

“Shifting responsibility for combustible cladding and orphaned building permits ignores the severe shortage of council building surveyors.”

Mr Clark said extra inspections could cost councils \$10,000 on apartment buildings, and more for big projects.

“They also assume an inspector can step on-site for the first time and identify issues with foundations or insulation when that work is already complete and sealed up,” he said.