

POLITICS VICTORIA CLADDING CRISIS

Owners trying to get off secret cladding list in a 'terrible Catch 22'

By [Clay Lucas](#)

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It took only a brief visual inspection of Tony Weir's Brunswick home for it to end up on a secret list of more than 1000 dangerous buildings across Victoria with flammable cladding.

But despite his owners' corporation having what it believes is proof the building is not a danger, it is being forced to wade through an impenetrable bureaucratic quagmire to find out what needs to be done to get it off that list.



Tony Weir at his Brunswick home, which has been deemed to have flammable cladding - despite evidence it may not. JUSTIN MCMANUS

Mr Weir is among thousands of Victorians whose properties have been devalued by appearing on the Victorian Building Authority's list of dangerously clad buildings.

Most got on the list after a check of the paperwork and a quick site visit from the local council.

But getting off the list is, as Mr Weir's experience shows, almost impossible.

"They are saying it's non-compliant, but we've provided them with the documents showing that it is compliant, and they have refused to even engage with us," Mr Weir said of his dealing with the authority.

That authority has passed the matter to his local council, Moreland.

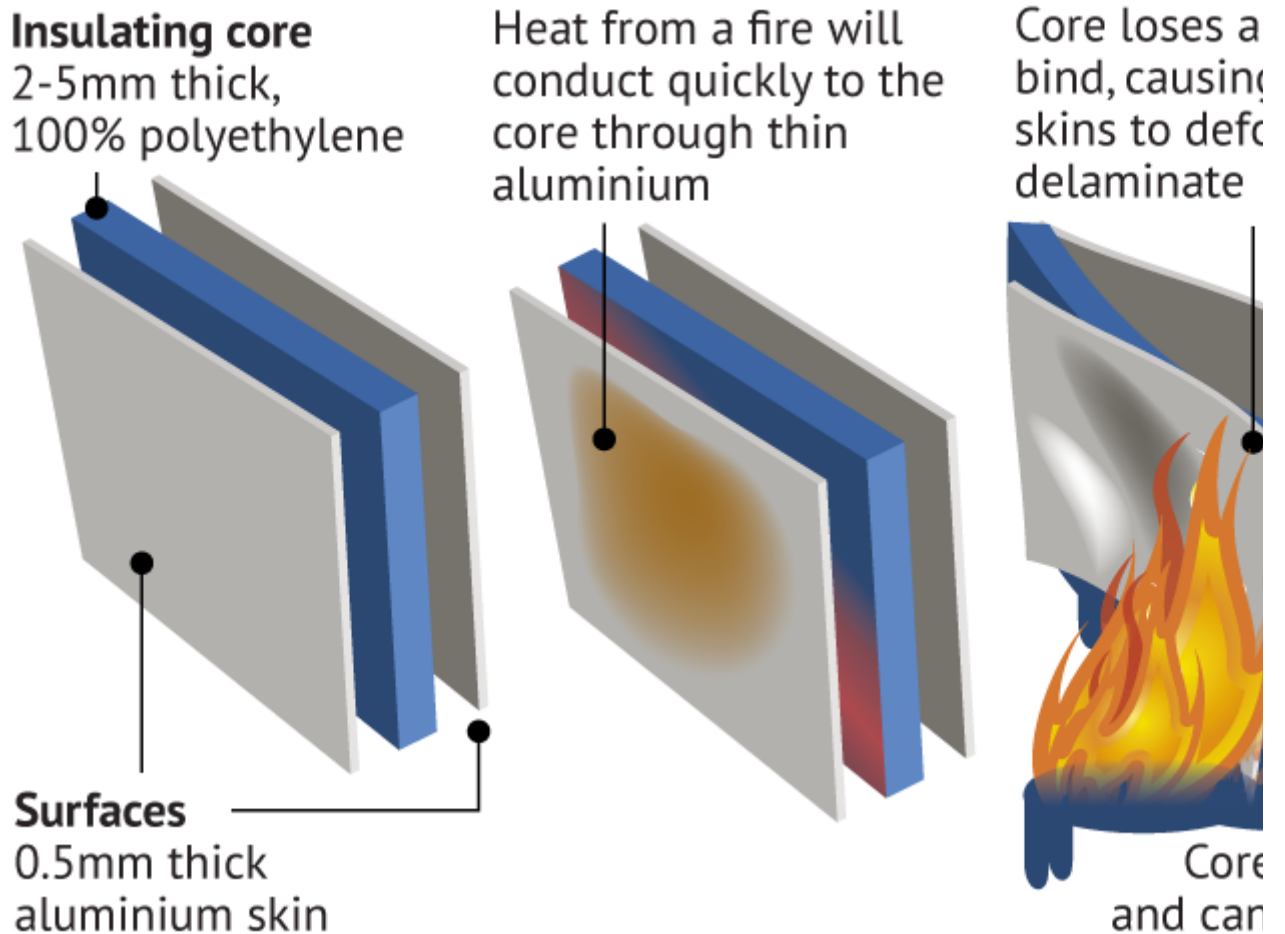
The council, which provided the initial material to the state government's Victorian Cladding Taskforce, hasn't been able to fully explain how owners get off the list. It is now assisting owners with fresh tests of their building's cladding.

When the authority told residents in Mr Weir's block that the building was on its list in March, they instructed them to inform any potential buyers in sales documentation.

Since then, Mr Weir said, sales of apartments had stopped.

"I don't want to sell, but there are others who do. There is an elderly couple who are thinking of moving into a nursing home who are going to have to discount their apartment and sell it at a loss."

Aluminium composite cladding panel Flammable core



Graphic: Jamie Brown

About 1100 properties across Victoria have been identified as having flammable cladding but the government is keeping that list secret because it argues identifying buildings would put them at risk of arson.

Mr Weir said documentation provided when the apartment block was built in 2013 showed the cladding was compliant with Australian standards and the building code. Regardless of this, the building has been deemed medium risk. "We are stuck in this terrible Catch 22," he said.

One building consultant, Sahil Bhasin from Roscon, said it was unlikely that the building would meet the necessary standards to be removed from the authority's list. But the lack of information he had seen in so many cases sent owners into meltdown.

"Before they issue these building notices, [the authority] needs to meet owners and explain what they are about to do because it just puts everyone into a frenzy."

Moreland Council's city futures director Kirsten Coster confirmed that the building had been identified as potentially having combustible cladding.

She said the council's municipal building surveyor was assisting the building's owner's corporation with advice on how to arrange for samples to be taken "to

confirm the exact nature of the cladding used on the building". She said this would be a "positive first step" to find a possible resolution.

But Mr Weir said that, even once Moreland "established to their liking that it's not flammable, it's not clear how we come off the list".

He said owners were pleased Moreland was now trying to help, having previously said it was the Victorian Building Authority's problem. But he said all levels of government appeared more concerned with "covering their own arses" than they were sorting the safe buildings from the dangerous.

A spokeswoman for the authority said that it encouraged the owner's corporation to "continue the conversation" with Moreland Council.



Clay Lucas



Clay Lucas is a senior reporter for The Age. Clay has worked at The Age since 2005, covering urban affairs, transport, state politics, local government and workplace relations for The Age and Sunday Age.
