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# Hit list identifies 10,000 potential Grenfell-style buildings

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**EXCLUSIVE**By **OLIVIA CAISLEY**, REPORTER

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Firefighters have drawn up a hit list of up to 10,000 buildings across the eastern states with suspected highly flammable cladding that would be flooded with as many as 50 responders in an emergency to avoid a repeat of London's deadly Grenfell Tower inferno that killed 72 people, including two Australians.

Combustible aluminium polyethelene, which fuelled the rapid spread of flames at Grenfell, as well as a similar firestorm at Melbourne's Docklands in 2014, where the blaze spread 13 floors in 10 minutes, has been found wrapping structures across the nation.

Fire and Rescue NSW, Victoria's Metropolitan Fire Brigade and Queensland's Fire and Emergency Services told **The Australian** they each had access to respective databases of buildings encased in non-compliant cladding, which they used to tailor their response.

QFES has established a special cladding unit tasked with identifying at-risk properties, conducting audits and allocating "risk levels" to determine the number of additional firefighters required in an emergency.

In April last year, a state government report prepared by the late former deputy premier Terry Mackenroth found flammable cladding might have been used in as many as 12,000 buildings across Queensland, with 879 requiring further investigation.

Among the buildings requiring urgent rectification work was Brisbane's Princess Alexandra Hospital, which was found to be wrapped in hundreds of square metres of flammable cladding. It has since been removed.

A spokeswoman for the Queensland Building and Construction Commission said nine buildings had been self-identified by building owners as part of the state government's Safer Buildings initiative. Eight of these were in Brisbane.

"The QBCC has contacted building owners around the state whose buildings require assessing," she said. "Almost half have responded to date."

QFES told **The Australian** that as a member agency of the state government's cladding taskforce, it had access to a list of structures possibly encased in the highly combustible cladding, which it used when responding to fires.

Fire and Rescue NSW has adopted similar contingencies.

An FRNSW spokeswoman told **The Australian** that over the past 18 months the state fire department had visited, inspected and assessed more than 2470 buildings — some on numerous occasions — to help them when assigning resources to blazes.

"FRNSW's response for buildings at potentially higher risk due to cladding can go up to a 6th Alarm, which assigns as many as 50 firefighters and up to 18 appliances to an incident," she said.

"Our local fire crews also undertake pre-incident plans, which enable firefighters to gather information about the buildings. This is crucial to operational readiness and means we can be most effective if a fire does occur."

A 2018 audit of about 185,000 structures across NSW identified about 430 "high risk" buildings. Certain types of cladding are now prohibited across the state, and their use carries fines of up to \$1.1 million for corporations and \$220,000 for individuals. A similar Victorian audit found up to 1400 buildings with potentially unsafe cladding.

The Metropolitan Fire Brigade has also implemented an emergency response plan tailored to these structures.

"An enhanced response means sending additional fire appliances and firefighters or a different combination of fire appliances and firefighters to an incident than is sent under a normal assignment rule," a spokeswoman said.

“MFB also works closely with other agencies, including the Victorian Building Association to ensure the appropriate response is taken when responding to these structures.”

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