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'Terror attacks' blamed for Wollongong combustible cladding secrecy



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BUYER BEWARE: The Planning Dept denied access to the combustible cladding register for Wollongong, citing fears of terrorist attacks.

There are 58 buildings in Wollongong believed to contain the banned combustible cladding blamed for London's Grenfell tower fire - but the State Government won't let you know where they are.

And the NSW Planning Department has used the threat of terrorist attacks on these Wollongong buildings as a reason for keeping the information secret.

In 2017 combustible aluminium panels were blamed for accelerating the fire in the Grenfell Tower in London, in which 72 people died.

Read more: [Planning Dept shameless in its reasons for keeping Wollongong building info secret](#)

Australia banned aluminium composite panels with a core of more than 30 per cent polyethylene for new works. NSW is still working out how to deal with the cladding in existing buildings.

A register of all buildings with combustible cladding was compiled by local councils, so the *Mercury* sought the information under Government Information Public Access (GIPA) laws.

Wollongong City Council declined to provide the information, passing the request to the NSW Planning Department. While other local councils had made the information public, Wollongong said the register belonged to the State Government.

GIPAA – DPIE - 20 – 766**Record #2**

The number of properties in the Wollongong City Council LGA listed on the NSW Combustible Cladding Register, as at 5 August 2019
58

The entirety of the information released by Planning.

Planning considered, then rejected the GIPA application - citing property prices and terror attacks.

"The possibility of an attack on a building that has been identified as having an amplified danger of fire is very real," Planning's information access and privacy officer said in his decision.

He also cited property prices for the rejection.

"I consider this information to be commercially valuable to a building owner or manager because information of this kind can have an effect on the market value and the insurability and insurance premiums for a property," he said.

The interests of purchasers were not mentioned.

The decision maker said he had "not identified any public interest considerations in favour of releasing the information".

He said only that there are 58 buildings in the Wollongong LGA which have, or may have, the panels, and that this is being "verified". It is not known how long this verification process will take.

He said it would be premature to reveal the addresses before they were verified, and that it would create an "impression" they were all high risk, which they may not be.

The officer also said the information was provided to the Government in confidence, so it should remain confidential.

This was not the view of many councils, which have been open about the buildings on their combustible cladding register. In Sydney, some prominent buildings have been identified as needing cladding replaced - including the Star casino and ABC headquarters.

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