

# Owners to get two more years to chase builders over flammable cladding

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Homeowners will get an extra two years to pursue legal action against builders responsible for installing flammable cladding on apartment buildings and homes.

Under a cladding compensation program introduced by the state government in July last year, homeowners had 10 years to make claims for buildings that had been built with combustible cladding.



Fire tears up the side of Dockland's Lacrosse building in 2014. The fire prompted a review of flammable cladding on apartments.MFB

A bill to be tabled in Parliament on Thursday proposes increasing this period to 12 years, something Planning Minister Richard Wynne said would give more homeowners the chance to make claims.

"Apartment owners are in this situation through no fault of their own and it's only right they have as much time as possible to pursue compensation through the courts," Mr Wynne said.

Sahil Bhasin, from building consultants Roscon, said increasing the claim period from 10 to 12 years was important because the two most-widely used flammable cladding materials – expanded polystyrene and aluminium composite panels – have predominantly been used in the past 15 years.

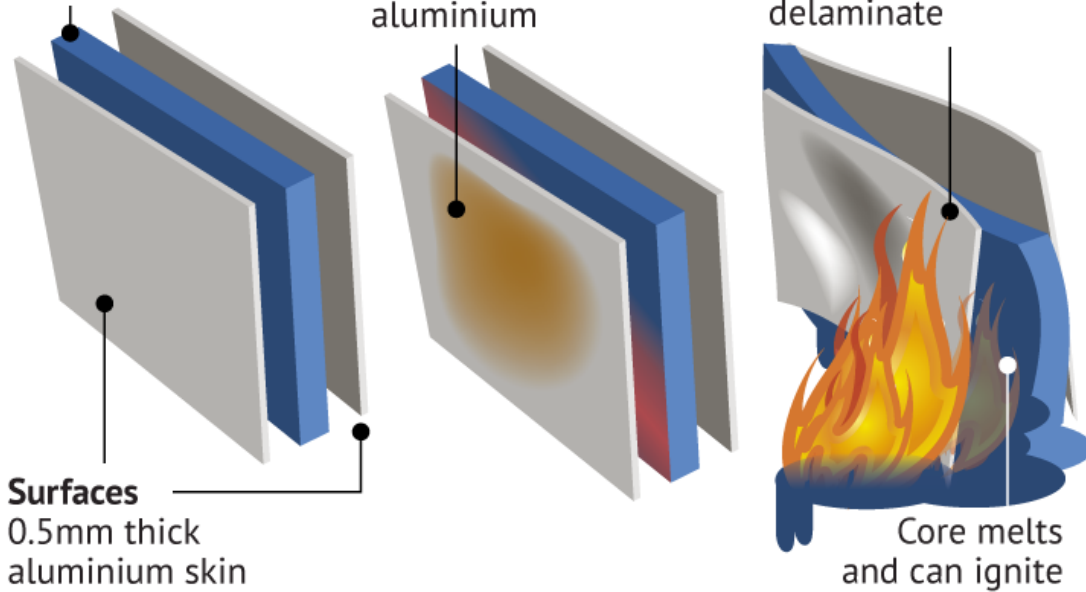
"We have completed many expert witness cladding reports in the last six months where the building was classed as 'high risk' but the occupancy permit was issued just over 10 years ago, meaning homeowners couldn't make claims," Mr Bhasin said.

# Aluminium composite cladding panel Flammable core

**Insulating core**  
2-5mm thick,  
100% polyethylene

Heat from a fire will  
conduct quickly to the  
core through thin  
aluminium

Core loses ability to  
bind, causing outer  
skins to deform and  
delaminate



"This is great news for our clients, who could now potentially save millions of dollars in rectification works."

Mr Bhasin said homeowners' claims were occasionally timed out by delays of up to two years in arranging Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal hearings.

"I can think of three or four buildings we've worked with where this would allow them to commence litigation against the builder," he said.

Following a fire at the Lacrosse tower in Docklands in 2015 and London's Grenfell tower fire in 2017, the Victorian government stepped up efforts to identify dangerous buildings.



Combustible cladding on London's Grenfell Tower exacerbated a fire that claimed 72 lives in 2017.<sup>AP</sup>

Last year it promised \$600 million for repairs and committed to chasing shonky builders through the courts on behalf of owners in the most serious cases.

A state government taskforce previously identified 432 extreme or high-risk buildings in need of repair.

Mr Wynne said the bill proposes separating Cladding Safety Victoria from the Victorian Building Authority, making it a stand-alone entity that would oversee the cladding rectification program.

"We're leading the world in responding to this international problem and helping to ensure those who have done the wrong thing contribute to the cost of fixing their mistakes," he said.