

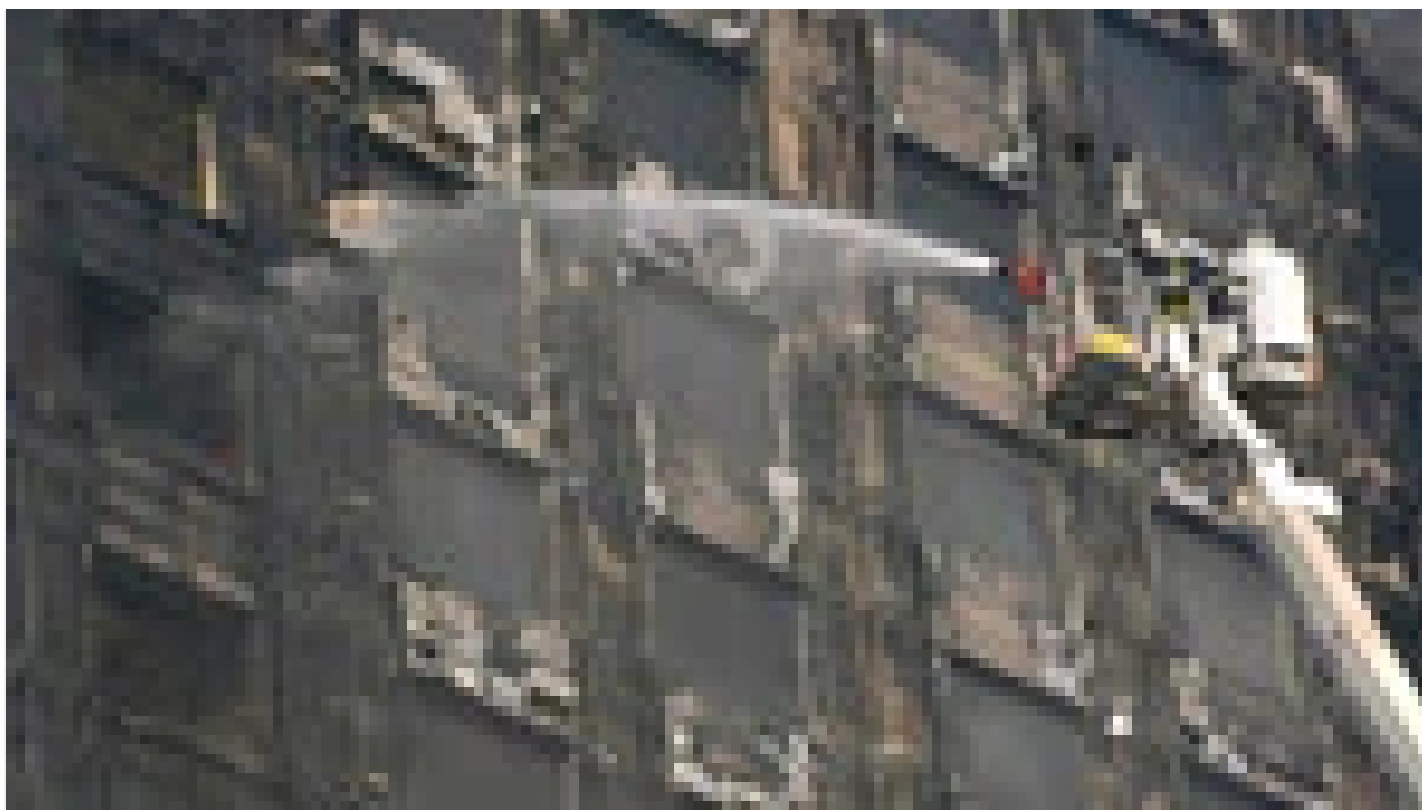
Flammable cladding: Crackdown on builders, surveyors and fire engineers linked to 790 properties statewide



Wes Hosking EXCLUSIVE

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An alarming number of rogue builders, surveyors and fire engineers have been caught out giving the green light to the use of flammable cladding.



The Lacrosse building fire raised concerns about the use of problem cladding in Victoria. Picture: File

A combustible [cladding crackdown](#) has resulted in action against dozens of builders linked to 790 properties statewide.

Rogue builders, building surveyors and fire engineers are accused of allowing problem cladding to be installed even after its risks were widely known.

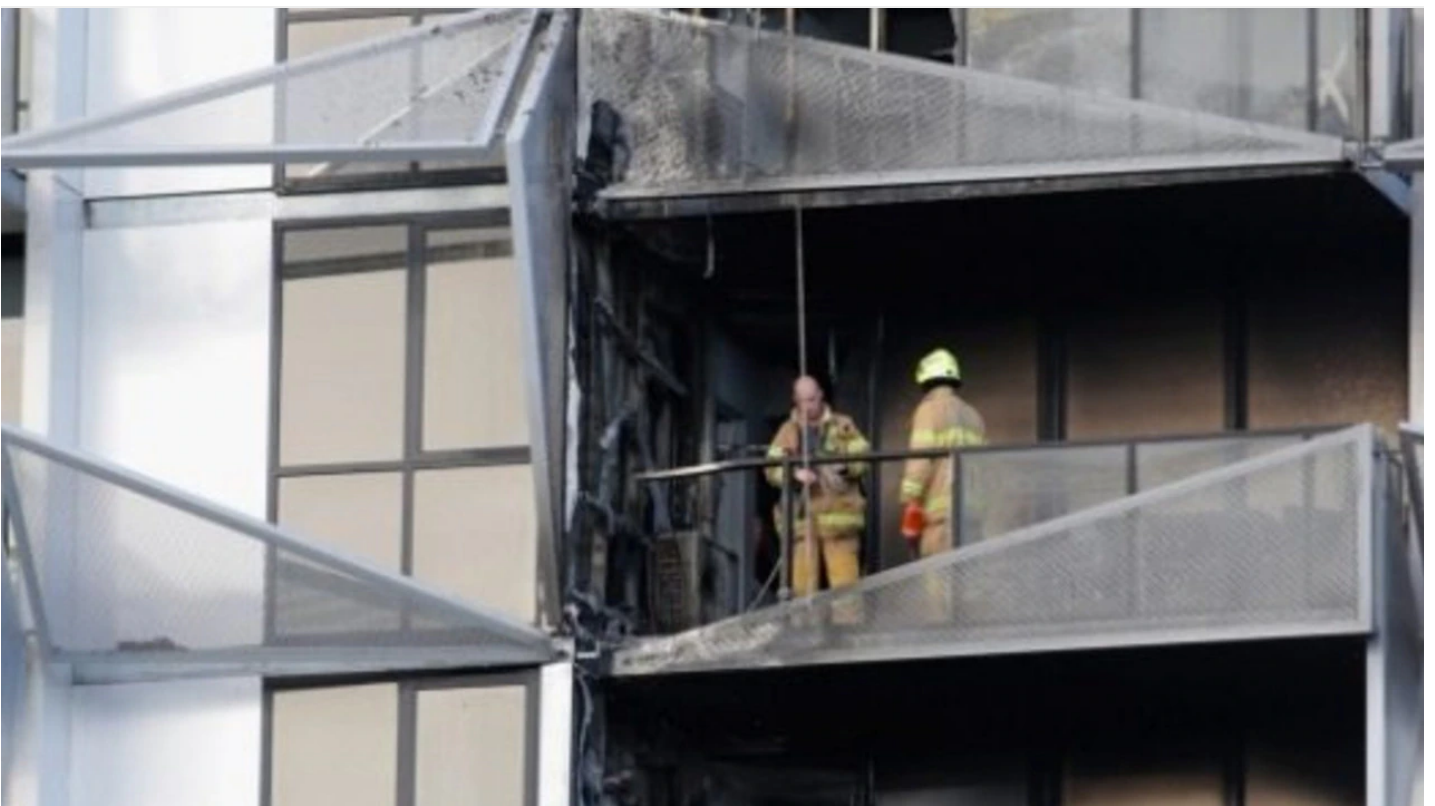
In one of the worst cases a fire engineer was linked to 60 properties wrapped in dangerous cladding while one building with dodgy material caught alight.

The industry was in March 2018 put on notice [not to use flammable cladding](#) — namely aluminium composite panels or rendered expanded polystyrene — on some multistorey buildings in the wake of the

Lacrosse apartments fire at Docklands and London's Grenfell Tower tragedy.



The Lacrosse apartment fire in Docklands sent shockwaves through the construction industry.



Firefighters check through the building after the fire spread quickly through the cladding.

High risk cladding on new multistorey buildings was formally banned on February 1.

Victorian Building Authority chief executive officer Sue Eddy said 39 practitioners had been subjected to enforcement action, which focused on practitioners responsible for especially serious contraventions and those associated with multiple locations.

“We’ve taken decisive action against those practitioners who have put the lives of Victorians at risk through the use of non-compliant, combustible cladding,” Ms Eddy said.

“The use of non-compliant combustible cladding has led to immense stress and heartache for homeowners and caused untold damage to the reputation of the building industry.”

More than 3200 properties have been inspected over the last three years as part of Victoria’s statewide cladding audit.

Allegations against one building surveyor related to five sites, prompting emergency orders, while another was linked to three problem properties.

A builder who authorised non-compliant cladding in a building’s construction and one who admitted similar wrongdoing were also disciplined.

Those caught have faced fines of up to \$45,000 and several had their licence or registration cancelled — meaning they’re unable to work for up to three years.



Victorian Building Authority chief executive officer Sue Eddy says the cladding crackdown should give consumers confidence.





London's Grenfell Tower tragedy killed 72 people when fire ripped through the 27-storey block of flats. Picture: File

Ms Eddy said the Victorian Building Authority's action aimed to restore confidence in the industry and it was working with builders, surveyors and fire engineers to avoid a repeat of cladding problems overseas where many countries still haven't worked out how to deal with the problem.

"Those practitioners who have done the wrong thing are in the very small minority, but their actions have unfortunately raised a question mark over the practices of the wider industry – which isn't fair," she said.

"Part of holding practitioners to account is to send a clear message to the community that the vast majority of practitioners do the right thing.

"Our focus since the start of the statewide cladding audit has been on the safety of residents and the wider community.

"Combustible cladding is an international problem and Victoria has led the world in responding to it."

Master Builders Victoria chief executive officer Rebecca Casson said the action served as a warning to any builder contemplating cutting corners and showed bad building practices shouldn't — and won't — be tolerated.

"It is vital to ensure that Victorians know that they can trust the safety and integrity of their building practitioner," Ms Casson said.

"Our industry as a whole, is significantly stronger and clearly more professionally ethical, than just a few rogue operators."

Authorising use of combustible cladding is banned under the building code.

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