


# Building surveyor suspended for approving combustible cladding

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By **TESSA AKERMAN**, REPORTER

12:00AM AUGUST 20, 2019 •  1 COMMENT

A Victorian building surveyor who signed off on combustible cladding on five multi-storey buildings has been suspended by the Victorian Building Authority on “public interest grounds”.

The VBA yesterday said it had immediately suspended the surveyor, who has a prior history of disciplinary action.

Planning Minister Richard Wynne said the Victorian government had toughened up penalties and given the VBA more powers to immediately suspend builders

“We have been very clear — building practitioners who do the wrong thing will be heavily penalised. We’ve toughened up penalties and given the VBA more powers to immediately suspend builders,” he said.

“A review of our building act will start in the coming months and aims to protect consumers and make sure those who do the wrong thing cannot walk away from substandard works.”

The five buildings are in Melbourne’s southeast and it is understood the investigation into the building surveyor started at the beginning of the year.

VBA executive director of operations Mark Rossiter said the surveyor’s repeated approval of dangerous building materials, along with a prior history of disciplinary action, created clear grounds for immediate suspension. “The VBA’s action will ensure this surveyor cannot continue to sign off on non-compliant building work and jeopardise the safety of Victorians,” he said.

The surveyor has been given 28 days to respond to the VBA's show cause notice and could face financial penalties or a permanent ban.

In 2017, the state government toughened penalties for building practitioners with a person who knowingly carried out non-compliant building work facing fines up to \$99,132.

Inner-city apartment block Neo 200 caught fire in February after the cladding was set alight.

The building was found to have the same cladding as London's deadly Grenfell Tower.

Victoria established a cladding taskforce in 2017 that so far has inspected more than 2200 buildings.

The statewide audit was triggered by the 2014 Lacrosse building fire in Melbourne's Docklands, where fire raced up 13 storeys in 10 minutes, bringing the issue of flammable cladding to public's attention. As of July, 173 buildings in the Moreland locality were identified with cladding, followed by 89 buildings in Port Phillip and 81 in the City of Melbourne.

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