

# Feud over ‘botched’ cladding role

Victoria’s building authority has been accused of botching its role in handling of dangerous cladding.



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The Neo200 building in Melbourne, which had a fire fuelled by aluminium cladding in 2019. Picture: Stuart McEvoy

Victoria’s building authority has been accused of seriously botching its role in handling dangerous cladding in the state by a peak institute, who also said it was now incapable of doing its job.

The bizarre feud has raised serious questions about the agency’s role in surveying and identifying cladding.

The complaints do not relate to Cladding Safety Victoria’s ongoing rectification works, but the Victorian Building Authority’s role surveying building, issuing notices and enforcing safety measures.

In a stunning attack on the VBA, the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors has lashed at the government agency as contributing to the problem and said it was no longer capable of doing its job.

“Regrettably, AIBS now considers that it is required to state publicly that it has lost confidence in the ability of the VBA, as a regulating authority, to carry out its primary functions effectively and fairly,” it said in a statement seen by the Herald Sun.

“The manner in which the VBA has undertaken its role in recent times has also raised serious concerns that AIBS considers must be addressed immediately.”

The institute says there is now an “an absence of leadership” on buildings which were part of the statewide cladding audit which had left “building owners, building surveyors and the industry at large without clear and definitive resolution”.



Firefighters check the Lacrosse building in the Docklands after a blaze spread quickly through the cladding in 2014.

The VBA was also accused of “failing to correspondingly act with respect to cladding issues affecting a vast number of public and high-profile buildings in Victoria, for which the VBA is the relevant building surveyor”.

“Despite repeated requests from Municipal Building Surveyors (MBSs) for clarity from the VBA in matters of combustible cladding for approximately 500 buildings, the VBA is now returning these buildings to MBSs, where little to none have been resolved by the VBA, placing undue burden and risk on MBSs who are currently chronically under resourced.”

The AIBS also said it had concerns about the qualifications handed out by the VBA, saying it believed some accredited surveyors did not meet proper standards.

It welcomed an inquiry into allegations the authority has a toxic culture of bullying which were, first revealed in the Herald Sun earlier this year, and said it would make its own submission.

“AIBS urges any member who considers they are, or may have been, affected by the manner in which the VBA has approached its regulatory role to seek legal advice, and professional counselling if required,” it said.

Victorian Building Authority chief executive Sue Eddy hit back at the institute and denied their claims.

“We make no apologies for taking enforcement action against practitioners who have put the safety of Victorians at risk,” she said.

“Victorians rightly expect that all practitioners follow the rules, when they don’t the VBA is there to take action, we will continue to do this without fear or favour.

“It is unfortunate that AIBS has misrepresented facts with their own opinion – the VBA does not accept its unfounded claims.”