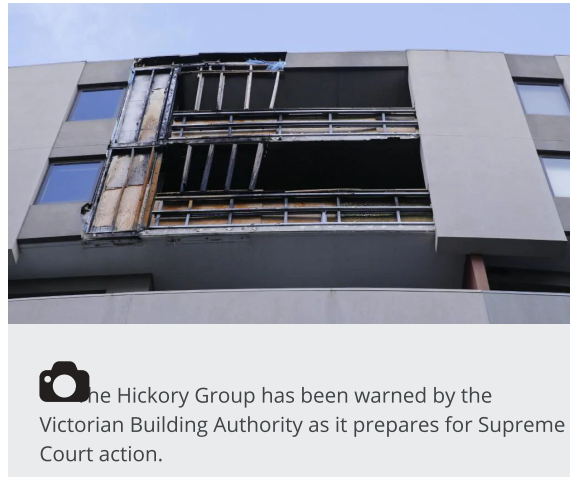


# Hickory Group warned by Victorian Building Authority ahead of Supreme Court action

A construction company responsible for using dodgy cladding in 25 properties around Victoria have been given a stern warning by the Victorian Building Authority, as Hickory Group prepares to go to court.

Andrew Koubaridis, Herald Sun

| October 25, 2019 9:00pm



A builder is going to court to try and thwart disciplinary action taken by Victoria’s building regulator — but he has been warned “no one is above the law”.

Hickory, the construction company run by Michael Argyrou with his brother George, was slapped with disciplinary action in July by the [Victorian Building Authority](#) over its use of flammable aluminium cladding on the Anstey Square apartments in Brunswick.

A *Sunday Herald Sun* investigation [revealed the VBA action against Hickory Group](#) over its use of dodgy cladding.

Twenty-five Hickory-built properties have been identified by the statewide cladding audit as having non-compliant cladding

At least 17 of the company’s non-compliant buildings have been rated at high risk or extreme risk of fire, including [Anstey Square](#), where a balcony blaze in 2017 spread via cladding to the next floor.

The fire was one of the triggers for the Victorian Cladding Taskforce.





The balcony blaze at Anstey Square in Brunswick was one of the triggers for the Victorian Cladding Taskforce.

Michael Argyrou filed a motion in the Supreme Court action last week attempting to stop the regulator's action.

He was named as the registered builder on the building permit for the Anstey Square apartments.

The VBA has ordered Hickory to show why it should not be sanctioned over its role in the cladding crisis. If the action is successful, he could face sanctions or be deregistered as a builder.

A statement from Mr Argyrou said: "Hickory is currently in the process of challenging the show cause notice and the jurisdiction in which the VBA had to issue the notice. Until a decision has been made with regards to this challenge Hickory is not in a position to comment on the show cause notice itself."

Hickory had not been told by the VBA which Hickory buildings have identified as a risk and wanted to know which ones they were.



Michael Argyrou filed a motion in the Supreme Court last week in an attempt to stop the regulator's action.

"Hickory has never, ever walked away from a defect liability claim. Hickory has paid multiple defect liability claims — even when they have not had a legal obligation to do so. They have done this because they have sympathy for homeowners being put in this situation by the regulators. Hickory reiterates that combustible cladding is a global regulatory issue."

VBA's Chief Executive Sue Eddy said the action would be defended.

"It is extraordinary to have a building practitioner claiming that he cannot — and should not — be disciplined by the industry regulator," said Ms Eddy.

"No one is above the law and that includes Mr Argyrou."

She said Mr Argyrou was claiming he couldn't be held responsible for his company's actions — despite his name being on the building permit.

## **MORE NEWS:**

[\*\*STUDENTS SICK IN FLEMINGTON GASTRO OUTBREAK\*\*](#)

[\*\*DUTTON FACES SECRECY INVESTIGATION\*\*](#)

[\*\*DOG SETS RINGWOOD APARTMENT ON FIRE\*\*](#)

At the time the apartments were built, a building company could not be registered as a practitioner in Victoria.

Ms Eddy said Mr Argyrou was arguing the VBA didn't have jurisdiction to take disciplinary action against him.

“Mr Argyrou is attempting to walk away from his responsibilities and serious breaches of the Building Act, which have put community safety at risk. We will not stand by and allow that to happen.”

[andrew.koubaridis@news.com.au](mailto:andrew.koubaridis@news.com.au)