

Residents in 37 high rise towers ordered to remove cladding

Residents in almost 40 apartment blocks across Sydney have officially been told they are living in potential firetraps due to flammable cladding. Another 40 towers are under review. It comes two years after London's deadly Grenfell's tower fire.

Linda Silmalis, chief reporter, The Sunday Telegraph



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Residents in 37 apartment blocks across Sydney have been delivered the news they have dreaded for two years — their buildings are potential death traps covered in flammable cladding which must be removed.

The apartment buildings are all four-storeys or higher. They are among 123 residential buildings in Sydney that have been identified by NSW Fire and

Rescue as potentially having high-risk aluminium-based exterior panels.

Local council inspections then confirmed the cladding panels in the 37 apartment buildings are dangerous and must be replaced.

Another 40 buildings are still undergoing council assessments after being identified by the Fire and Rescue, and the figure is expected to rise as council assessment hasn't started yet on the rest of the identified buildings.



The NSW audit was ordered after more than 70 people died in the Grenfell's Tower blaze in London in June 2017.
Picture: Natalie Oxford

More than two years since the State government began auditing buildings following the fire, fuelled by cladding, in the Grenfell Tower in London which killed 72 people, it is the first time the number, and locations, of NSW residential buildings with serious inflammable cladding problems has been revealed.

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With the cost of removing cladding costing up to \$60,000 for each unit, the NSW Strata Community Association has called on the State government to provide a financial aid package such as low cost loans, and to clarify the legal liabilities of the buildings' developers.

Of the 123 residential buildings identified by Fire and Rescue, and either already confirmed by councils to be clad in flammable panels, undergoing council inspection or awaiting further investigation, 27 are in the City Of Sydney local government area.

The Ryde, Canterbury and Parramatta local government areas each have nine potentially flammable buildings.


Seven buildings have been identified in Wollongong, six in Cumberland and five in both the Inner West and Waverley council areas.

Liverpool, Canada Bay, Hornsby and Sutherland each have four buildings with potentially flammable cladding.



etter Regulation Minister Kevin Anderson.



SW Greens MP David Shoebridge.

The Bayside, Blacktown, Northern Beaches, Randwick, Strathfield, The Hills and Willoughby council areas are each home to three buildings.

Possibly dangerous cladding was detected on two buildings in the North Sydney local government area and one building was identified in each of the Campbelltown, Fairfield, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Newcastle, Port Macquarie and Woollahra council areas.

Councils are working with the owners corporations on rectification works, including drafting action plans on how the cladding will be replaced.

The State government, which has established a special Cladding Support Unit to work with councils, requires any building with aluminium cladding containing combustible materials above 30 per cent to be removed.

Of the 37 buildings that have been confirmed as requiring rectification work, 18 have drafted an action plan on how they intend to replace the cladding, with 19 at a stage where it is being removed.



Ventworth Point resident Sylvia Adarade learned in February her building's cladding was to be replaced. Picture: Richard Dobson

The residential towers are in addition to 34 government buildings that were identified as having dangerous cladding.

The confirmation of buildings with flammable cladding comes almost a year since The Sunday Telegraph revealed concerns by residents living in an apartment complex in Wentworth Point in Sydney's west which had been flagged as "potentially" being at risk at how slow the process was taking.

The Victorian government has put \$600,000 for each building on the table for cladding replacement, but the NSW government has so far left it up to building owners to pay.

NSW Strata Community Association president Chris Duggan said some owners, who were being hit with special levies from \$20,000 to "much higher", were considering legal action against the developer while others were holding out to see if the Government will assist.

"There is lot of wrangling going on with councils, owners and the government," he said.

"Some owners are going about fixing their buildings quietly, others are considering legal options while many just want clarity."



Strata Community Association state president Chris Duggan.

The list of council areas with affected buildings comes amid a fight between Greens MLC David Shoebridge and the State government over its decision not to release the exact locations of the buildings.

“I believe it should not be kept a secret from renters, from people in their place of work or from people who go to a hospital that has flammable cladding on it,” he said.

“Let us find out what properties have flammable cladding on them.”

Better Regulation Minister Kevin Anderson said there was an expectation that the government ensured the assessments were being done thoroughly.

“Everyday we clear more buildings and learn more about the buildings requiring remediation work,” he said.

“There is an expectation that the government ensures assessment are done thoroughly which is exactly what we’re doing.”