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# Fix this cladding crisis, Labor tells Morrison

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**EXCLUSIVE**By **OLIVIA CAISLEY**, REPORTER12:00AM AUGUST 15, 2019 •  35 COMMENTS

The federal government must intervene in the flammable-cladding crisis — a national public safety issue that has been “fobbed off” on to the states — Labor industry spokesman Brendan O’Connor says.

In a letter to Scott Morrison obtained by *The Australian*, Mr O’Connor has sought clarification regarding Australia’s first combustible-cladding class action by owners of an apartment block in the Prime Minister’s Sydney electorate of Cook.

The action — launched in the Federal Court by owners of the luxury apartment complex Shores Dolls Point — claims that Aucobond-supplier Halifax Vogel Group and manufacturer 3A Composites should replace the combustible panels on the building and pay compensation.

The owners will allege that the polyethylene-core panels failed to meet commonwealth safety standards and carried a “material risk” of causing or spreading fire.

Combustible aluminium polyethylene has been found on buildings across the nation. The material fuelled the rapid spread of fire at Grenfell Tower in London in which 72 people died in 2017, as well as a similar fire at Melbourne’s Docklands in 2014, where the blaze spread 13 floors in 10 minutes.

The federal government brokered an agreement with the states and territories in July to create a “nationally consistent approach” to the problem.

Mr O’Connor says not enough is being done. “The federal government repeatedly stressed that matters related to the use of flammable cladding was a matter for the states and territories,” he writes.

He argues that the citing of commonwealth consumer law in the class action indicates the issue is a national responsibility.

The letter seeks clarification from Mr Morrison, asking him whether he has sought advice from the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission regarding the applicability of Australian consumer law to the use of flammable cladding. “The commonwealth does not have responsibility for regulating the built environment,” he writes.

A spokesman for Industry Minister Karen Andrews said: “The issues around building safety, including the non-compliant use of combustibile cladding, are symptoms of inadequate enforcement of the National Construction Code by states and territories.”

Mr O’Connor told *The Australian* the government needed to “stop the blame game, take charge and outline a plan to fix this mess and ensure public safety. Each day the Morrison government fails to take leadership and respond to the building industry crisis, businesses are closing down (and) the safety and lives of Australians are put at risk.”

**OLIVIA CAISLEY, REPORTER**

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