



ENGINEERS
AUSTRALIA

Mr Stan Krpan
Chief Executive Officer
Office of the Victorian Cladding Taskforce
PO Box 500
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Mr Krpan,

RE: Engineers Australia Submission

Engineers Australia would like to thank the Cladding Taskforce for the opportunity to make a submission on recommendations to be presented to the Victorian Government.

Ensuring public safety and security is a paramount concern for engineers, and for Engineers Australia; our Royal Charter determines that the association and its members must act in the public good.

Engineers Australia welcomes the Taskforce's project of undertaking a comprehensive audit on buildings that may be using cladding materials that are not fit for purpose. We look forward to the results of the audit so that a comprehensive engineering based program can be developed to assist in remediating any buildings that are found to be not fit for purpose.

Currently, frameworks exist that can, and should, prevent the application of non-compliant products onto buildings.

Legislative instruments including the *Building Act* carry sections that dictate enforcement actions and penalties for failure to comply with instructions and directions.

Similarly, approved certification schemes for products exist, such as CodeMark, that provide surety that products are tested to Australian Standards.

These instruments and frameworks have been in place for many years, yet the current system allows for buildings to be constructed using products that are not fit for purpose or are not compliant with the code.

The challenge for governments is bringing the powers of legislative instruments back into the sector and ensuring that complaint products can be certified correctly by qualified professionals, while at the same time ensuring that these processes do not overly hamper the construction sector.

Engineers Australia makes the following recommendations.

Recommendations

- The audit should aim at determining the scale of the aluminium cladding product issue for the whole state – Melbourne CBD, suburban areas, and regional area.
- The issue is not confined to high-rise buildings (>25 m effective height). The audit should also look at mid-rise buildings (< 25 effective height). These need not be


sprinkler protected and the risk could therefore be greater than in high rise buildings. Many of these are also located in the suburban areas.

- Having determined the scale of the issue, the focus should be to develop a state-wide, or nation-wide, solution to address the issue.
- Control of product certification under overall certification (*vis-a-vis*, substitutions, Design and Construct components etc.), and quality assurance achieved by inspections of key, representative elements on site (as installed) should always be performed by qualified professionals.
- The Regulations are so vague with regard to certification and inspections that no minimum or benchmark standard is evident and must be refined to provide clarity. Currently, the market reverts to a minimum service level for both certification and inspections. In some cases, this means that neither product reviews nor on-site inspections of engineering works are performed by engineering professionals.
- The Taskforce should establish an active building audit team made up of: Chartered members of Engineers Australia with expertise in fire safety engineering, civil and/or structural engineering who are registered on the National Engineering Register; Fellows of the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors; and relevant Municipal Building Surveyors.
- The audit group should have ongoing responsibility to conduct random audits on buildings as they come to construction phase. The audit team should report to the Board of the Victorian Building Authority and to the Minister for Planning.
- The Taskforce should commence an audit of the compliance regime of the Victorian Building Authority, to ensure that the Authority has transparent and independent regimes in place to ensure the safety and security of buildings in Victoria. The Taskforce should make recommendations directly to the Minister for Planning.
- Only qualified fire safety engineers should be involved in the design and application of cladding material used in the construction of buildings. Fire engineers are the most qualified to inspect cladding earmarked for high-rise buildings, to determine the extent of the risk.
- The State Government should review the relevant sections of the *Building Act* that deal with enforcement actions. Engineers Australia believes that the mechanisms for enforcement are in place however it would appear that these mechanisms are not being utilised effectively.

Engineers Australia looks forward to continuing to work proactively with the Cladding Taskforce and we would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Taskforce to discuss this submission in more detail.

Should you have any questions on our submission please contact me on (03) 9321 1707 or by email hcarlos@engineersaustralia.org.au.

Yours sincerely



Herve Carlos
Victoria Division Manager
Engineers Australia