

Victorian Cladding Taskforce

Terms of Reference

Introduction

The Government has established the Victorian Cladding Taskforce (VCT) to examine the use of external wall cladding on high and medium rise buildings in Victoria and make recommendations for any changes needed to restore confidence that fire safety issues are being addressed appropriately.

The 2014 fire at the Lacrosse building in Docklands highlighted the fire safety risks arising from the non-compliant use of cladding products - specifically aluminium composite panels - as external wall cladding on high-rise residential buildings. More recently, the tragic Grenfell fire in London has also highlighted the issue of cladding products possibly fitted in an inappropriate manner. An audit of 168 high rise residential and public buildings in the Melbourne CBD and inner urban areas conducted by the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) following the Lacrosse fire identified 51 percent of those audited had cladding fitted in a non-compliant manner.

The safety of building occupants and attending emergency services personnel in the event of an emergency such as a fire is always paramount. But fire safety goes beyond the building regulations and standards. The Metropolitan Fire Brigade investigation into the Lacrosse fire reinforced the importance of a multi-faceted approach with shared responsibility. The importance of well-functioning sprinklers, clear access to emergency exits and well maintained safety measures such as fire and smoke alarms and accessible fire extinguishers, in addition to building material design, selection and installation, were all important factors.

Victoria, through the Building Ministers Forum, has been championing a national approach to a response on both non-conforming products and the non-compliant use of products. The government has also made a submission to the Senate Inquiry into non-conforming building products. The Senate Economic References Committee is due to submit its final report on the inquiry by 31 October 2017.

New building regulations are also in place that extend the requirement for sprinkler protection to include all covered balconies, regardless of size.

However, in the wake of the tragic Grenfell fire, the establishment of the VCT recognises the need to review our existing response and make recommendations for system and any other improvements to ensure the high standard of safety and prevention Victorians deserve

Functions

The Victorian Cladding Taskforce will:

1. Informed by a review of the VBA audit, develop a scope, methodology, timetable and oversee a comprehensive audit of relevant buildings in Victoria to identify instances of the use of inappropriate cladding material that poses a risk to public health and safety.
2. Develop a process for the prompt rectification of these matters.
3. Examine the effectiveness of the current enforcement regime for ensuring practitioners comply with relevant regulations and legislation and make recommendations as appropriate.
4. Provide advice to the Minister for Planning and Government on how best to mitigate non-compliant uses of cladding material in Victoria in the future.
5. Develop clear and targeted messaging:
 - a. to residents, owners and building managers about what actions they can take to satisfy themselves of the safety of their buildings, and
 - b. that necessary actions are underway to protect the health and safety of occupants of medium and high rise buildings in Victoria.

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6. Make recommendations for timely actions required to protect the health and safety of building occupants and bring identified buildings into compliance,
7. Refer and recommend any enforcement and/or potential disciplinary action arising from the state-wide audit to the Victorian Building Authority for action.
8. Review and recommend improvements to the existing Victorian system for fire safety in high rise buildings.
9. Consider the potential cost and risk implications of the wide-spread removal of any non-compliant external wall cladding.

Membership

The Taskforce will be co-chaired by the Hon Ted Baillieu and Professor the Hon John Thwaites.

The remaining membership is drawn from Senior Officials of relevant regulators and related bodies, including:

1. Dr Owen Donald, Chief Commissioner Victorian Building Authority
2. Mr Paul Barker, Chair Worksafe Victoria
3. Mr Greg Wilson, Secretary Department of Justice and Regulation
4. Mr Nick Foa, Deputy Secretary Finance and Infrastructure and Director of Housing, Department of Health and Human Services
5. Cr Mary Laliou, President Municipal Association Victoria
6. Mr John Prendergast, President Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors' Group
7. Dr Andi Diamond, Board President, Metropolitan Fire Brigade
8. Mr Craig Lapsley, Emergency Management Commissioner
9. Ms Christine Wyatt, A/Secretary Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

The Taskforce may consider establishing a stakeholder reference group to assist its inquiries which may include representatives of the building and development industries, representatives of workers in those industries, and representatives of consumers.

It is envisaged that the work of the Taskforce will be undertaken by working groups drawn from the organisations represented on the Taskforce and by engaging independent expertise as required

Relevant government departments and authorities will cooperate and assist the Taskforce as required.

Office of the Taskforce

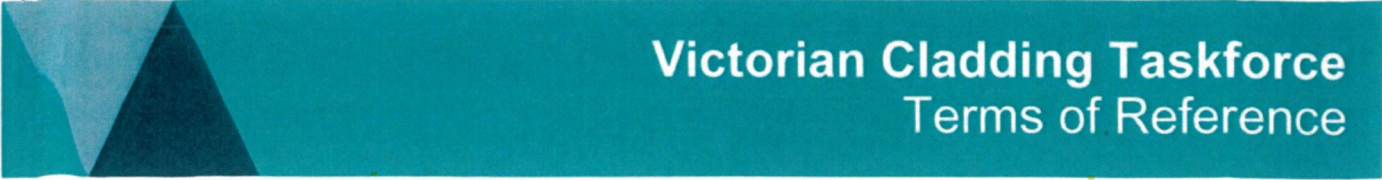
The Taskforce will be supported in its work by the Office of the Taskforce (the Office) overseen by a Chief Executive Officer.

Pending establishment of the Office, support will initially be provided by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), with ongoing arrangements to be agreed between the Minister for Planning and the Premier.

The Office of the Taskforce will provide all necessary secretariat and policy support, development and advice required by the Taskforce in delivering their Terms of Reference. This includes any procurement, obtaining any legal or other advice required by the Taskforce to inform their deliberations.

The Office Secretariat will be responsible for the administration and operations of the Taskforce.

Corporate services to be provided by DELWP to enable the establishment and proper functioning of the office in agreement with the Secretary DELWP.



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Timelines

The Minister for Planning has requested interim recommendations on immediate issues and an outline and timetable for further work by 31 October 2017.

Following receipt of the interim report, the Minister for Planning will further consider the tenure of the Taskforce.

Dated

The Hon. Richard Wynne MP
Minister for Planning