Fire Risk Cladding – Urgent Government Action Required to the City of Sydney

The list of Sydney properties on the combustible cladding register has been made public and the results are shocking. 341 properties are on the register in Sydney alone and many of these are high profile, residential, retail and public buildings. Even more shocking is that no mandatory assessment regime has been imposed and that fire safety orders have been made in only 7 cases.

Information on the Planning NSW website suggests that the NSW Government's decision not to impose mandatory safety assessments was based on problems in the insurance market limiting the number of experts available for such assessments. Given the enormous risks involved, as illustrated by the London Grenfell disaster, neither that position nor the justification for it is satisfactory.

Given the complexity and costs involved, building owners may be unwilling or unable to resolve their fire risk cladding issues, at least without assistance. Compounding the problem, the Government seems to be leaving it to councils to address the issue. However, Councils have not been given the additional powers and resources which they would require to do so.

Clearly, a whole of government response involving the Commonwealth, NSW and councils is required and the NSW Government should take a leadership role in formulating such a response. The objective would be to create a framework within which fire risk cladding issues can be resolved promptly and effectively, with building owners receiving such technical and other assistance as may be required for that purpose.

Key takeaways

- 341 properties in Sydney are on the combustible cladding register, with only 7 fire safety orders issued.
- The NSW Government has not imposed mandatory safety assessments due to insurance market issues.
- Building owners may struggle to resolve fire risk cladding issues without assistance.
- Councils lack the necessary powers and resources to address fire risk cladding effectively.
- A coordinated response from all levels of government is essential to resolve these issues.

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Last reviewed 5 June 2019

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