

COMBUSTIBLE CLADDING: A TIMELY REMINDER FOR OWNERS, RESIDENTS & STRATA MANAGERS

June 2021 marks four years since the devastating Grenfell Tower fire in London. More recently, fires in high-rise residential Dubai properties, alongside Melbourne sites Neo200 and Lacrosse, have led to increased media exposure and public anxiety around the issue of combustible cladding. So what exactly is cladding, how can property owners identify combustible kinds, and most importantly, what can be done to mitigate the risks?

WHAT IS CLADDING?

A wide range of cladding is used around Australia, but not all of it is combustible. The two types posing risks to residents and the wider community include Aluminium Composite Panels (ACP) and Rendered Expanded Polystyrene (EPS). ACP and EPS are popular external cladding choices because they are sturdy, weather-resistant, and can be visually appealing. In the event of a fire, however, ACP and REP can increase the rate at which flames spread; thereby placing building occupants and those in the immediate vicinity, at significant risk.

HOW CAN I IDENTIFY TYPES OF CLADDING?

A visual inspection of your property is the easiest way to understand what types of cladding have been used. Because cladding is typically used for aesthetic purposes, it is usually easy to identify. Most commonly, cladding will feature on balconies, awnings, around windows, main points of entry, and external walls.

MY BUILDING HAS CLADDING: HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S COMBUSTIBLE?

If you built your home using a builder, or know which company built your home:

- Contact the builder/supplier for the product specifications used on your property. They should have a complete list of all the building products used.

If you're a strata manager or a resident in an apartment/multi-story high-rise building with combustible cladding:

- Contact your building/strata manager or owners' corporation for more information and/or
- Reach out to your State or Territory cladding authority or task force

WHAT IF I CAN'T LOCATE INFORMATION ON MY BUILDING'S CLADDING?

In this instance, source a cladding audit from a qualified fire engineer. These audits can range from remote analysis to comprehensive onsite assessments. Cladding audits may also include testing of cladding products to specify exact materials and their combustibility. These reports will provide clarity on the state of cladding on your property.

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Our specialist team of Honan brokers and risk engineers is ready to guide and support property owners through their cladding concerns and unique risk profiles. To learn more about how we can help, please reach out at any time.

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