

Media Release

Peak Body Calls for Combustible Cladding Solution as More Lives are Lost in Valencia Fire

Combustible cladding has led to the deaths of 10 people after a fire engulfed two apartment blocks in Valencia, Spain on Friday.

Strata Community Association (SCAQ) is again today calling on the State Government to act urgently to provide the support and services needed for the immediate removal of dangerous combustible cladding across Queensland.

SCAQ General Manager, Laura Bos, said that safety needs to be a top priority for the State Government.

“The Government has consistently dragged the chain on the issue of rectification of combustible cladding on buildings across the state,” said Ms Bos.

This year marks the 7th anniversary of the devastating Grenfell Tower fire that resulted in 72 deaths and more than 70 people injured, and another tragedy has occurred.

“In recent days 10 people have died due to a fire that become an inferno because of combustible cladding in Spain – and it is only a matter of time before more lives are lost and those could very well be closer to home.”

The affected buildings will only be made safe once the Government intervenes to push rectification efforts over the line, and once this dangerous combustible cladding is removed.

Ms Bos said that the sector is crying out for assistance and the Government has been stalling for years.

“This is a matter of life and death. If the Government deems it urgent to remove combustible cladding from the Government-owned Menso apartment building in South Bank, they have the obligation to provide the resources to taxpayers to make their homes and building safe,”

Everyone that can afford to remove the cladding on their buildings has, but the Government has left those who cannot afford it in the dark.

“We understand that some buildings will cost more than \$4 million to rectify.”

“Plus, there is the added burden of increased insurance premium costs while this known risk remains which is compounding the issue.”

“It’s important to remember that the people affected by cladding are impacted through absolutely no fault of their own.”

SCAQ notes that other jurisdictions have taken action on the issue, but we are still yet to see a rectification commitment from the Queensland Government.

“New South Wales has Project Remediate, a joint venture between the New South Wales Cladding Taskforce and Fire and Rescue New South Wales, which has audited over 185,000 building records and inspected over 4,000 buildings to date,”

“The Victorian Government has put \$600 million on the table through Cladding Safety Victoria and will potentially provide funding for many of the higher risk, class 2 residential buildings authorities have identified after a state-wide audit.”

SCAQ is calling for a program modelled from the ACT’s *Private Building Cladding Scheme*, which offers low interest rate concessional loans for the removal and replacement of combustible cladding.

SCAQ has been actively engaging with the issue for years, calling on the Government to not give affected people a hand-out, but a hand-up.

SCAQ has genuine concerns with fire safety in buildings, especially considering the exponential uptake of electric scooters and other electric vehicles being introduced and charged in buildings with potentially combustible cladding. The addition of extra fire hazards into buildings only increases the need for action to be taken immediately on combustible cladding.

Despite the provisions made in the *Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022*, there is still zero support for affected buildings to rectify the issue. The presence of combustible cladding on buildings puts upward pressure on insurance premiums – something that Queenslanders are struggling to pay amid a cost-of-living crisis.

“Queensland is lagging behind and everyday more lives are put at risk. It is not good enough. The Government needs to act now.” said Ms Bos.

About SCAQ

Strata Community Association Queensland is the peak association supporting the state’s strata sector, with 1 300 individual and corporate members who help oversee, advise, and manage assets worth over \$280 billion for Queenslanders.

The strata industry in Queensland has an annual economic contribution of over \$1.75 billion, through over 60 000 Queenslanders employed either directly or indirectly. Most of these Queenslanders work in small and medium-sized businesses.

We bring together people who manage strata schemes, and those who provide services for schemes. We also provide education, advice, and advocacy to enable better understanding of the regulations, and obligations.

ENDS

Media Contact: Karsten Duvel at karsten.duvel@strata.community