

# Putting problems in the way of solutions

A Review Commissioned by Cladding Safety Victoria – Fire Safety Engineering Services in response to combustible cladding

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6 October 2025



**W E I R**  
Legal & Consulting

Commissioned by



**CLADDING  
SAFETY**  
Victoria



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## Abbreviations and acronyms

The following definitions and abbreviations are used in this document.

<b>ACP</b>	Aluminium Composite Panels with a polymer core installed as an external wall cladding or lining or attachment as part of an external wall system	<b>MBS</b>	Municipal Building Surveyor
<b>ARP</b>	Advisory reference panel	<b>MG-15</b>	Minister's Guideline 15 – <i>Remediation Work Proposals for Mitigating Cladding Risk for Building Containing Combustible External Cladding</i> issued by the Minister for Planning on 21 September 2023
<b>BAB</b>	Building Appeals Board	<b>OC</b>	Owners corporation
<b>BPC</b>	Building and Plumbing Commission, formerly the Victorian Building Authority (VBA)	<b>OCM</b>	Owners corporation manager
<b>CSV</b>	Cladding Safety Victoria	<b>PMCR</b>	Protocols for Mitigating Cladding Risk
<b>CRMF</b>	Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework	<b>RAT</b>	Risk assessment tool
<b>Department</b>	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to 31 December 2022, Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) from 1 January 2023  *The building functions of DELWP were transferred to DTP on 1 January 2023 as part of a broader machinery of government change.	<b>RWP</b>	Remediation Works Proposal issued by CSV applying MG-15 and the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework
<b>EA</b>	Engineers Australia	<b>SCA</b>	Statewide Cladding Audit Program
<b>EPS</b>	Expanded Polystyrene used as an external insulation and (finished) rendered wall system	<b>SFPE</b>	Society of Fire Protection Engineers
<b>FRV</b>	Fire Rescue Victoria	<b>SFS</b>	Society of Fire Safety
<b>FSE</b>	Fire Safety Engineer	<b>SFS Guide</b>	Engineers Australia, Society of Fire Safety Practice Guide Façade/ External Wall Fire Safety Design, 7 March 2019
<b>IFEA</b>	Institution of Fire Engineers Australia	<b>VBA</b>	Victorian Building Authority, now known as the Building and Plumbing Commission (BPC)
<b>MAV</b>	Municipal Association of Victoria	<b>VCT</b>	Victorian Cladding Taskforce
		<b>VMBSG</b>	Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group

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## Foreword

When Cladding Safety Victoria was established in 2019 to address the risk of combustible cladding across Victoria's built environment, every effort was made to involve the fire safety engineering fraternity. With the support of RMIT and CSIRO (Data 61) we drew on expertise from fire safety engineers and risk engineers around the world to develop a clear risk assessment methodology and a cladding risk mitigation framework.

However, even after this approach was codified in Minister's Guideline 15, some fire safety engineers closer to home chose to maintain an individualistic approach. It was because of this behaviour that CSV decided to commission an independent review, to determine whether systemic issues prevented fire safety engineers from making a positive contribution to addressing cladding risk in Victoria or whether CSV could have done more to educate fire safety engineers on its risk engineering methodology.

This review has been undertaken by Bronwyn Weir who, with a long-standing expertise in building regulation including as the co-author of the Building Confidence Report, has a unique insight into the expected role of practitioners across the building industry. Importantly, all interested parties were given an opportunity to present their perspective and many have done so. This has enabled Bronwyn to present clear and impartial observations.

I am hopeful that the various professional bodies supporting the fire engineering community consider these observations and rise to the challenge to find positive ways to transform a nascent discipline into a robust engineering profession.



**Dan O'Brien**

Chief Executive, Cladding Safety Victoria



## Executive Summary

Cladding Safety Victoria (CSV) was established in 2019. Its purpose was to deliver the Victorian Government's \$600 million funding program to remediate privately owned apartment buildings and government buildings with unsafe combustible cladding. CSV engaged a number of external consultants to support the delivery of the program. This included building surveyors, project managers and builders to assist owners corporations (OCs) to undertake remediation work. CSV also operated a clerk of works program to oversee and ensure quality and compliant outcomes.

CSV says the most challenging profession that it engaged with were Fire Safety Engineers (FSEs). CSV says compared to the services provided by other consultants, the service delivery by FSEs was often slow, involving iterative reports in which conclusions changed based on limited reasoning. CSV's efforts to improve consistency and make the risk assessment process more efficient were resisted, with FSEs often putting problems in the way of solutions. These and other concerns raised by CSV are set out in more detail in this report.

As a result of its experience with FSEs, CSV commissioned this Review. This is one of five reports CSV has published on the cladding rectification program so far. The intention of these reports is to share learnings from the program based on analysis of data collected and to offer suggestions for improvement or observations which industry and other governments running similar programs may find useful.

CSV wanted this Review to be conducted by an independent third party, given the issues it sought to examine about FSEs could, understandably, elicit a defensive response from the fire safety engineering profession. This proved to be the case. From the outset, some FSEs accused the Review of bias and questioned why the Terms of Reference did not include a review of CSV's conduct.

Notwithstanding the adverse reaction by some, the majority of FSEs that engaged with this Review were courteous, forthcoming and considered. They accepted the objectives of this Review were to identify learnings and encourage enhancement of the profession. Some FSEs were eager to share their frustrations about CSV and most did so in a professional manner. We thank these FSEs for their frank engagement and time. Some of the largest providers of cladding risk assessment services declined to engage with the Review. This is their prerogative, although it means their views have not been captured.

There was consensus on several of the issues for examination in this Review. For example, it was agreed that when FSEs were initially being called upon to undertake cladding risk assessments in 2018, many were ill-equipped to do this task. The approach to cladding risk assessment adopted by the profession was subjective, leading to inconsistent opinions between engineers but also varied opinions by the same engineer based on limited reasoning.

Competency issues within the profession were identified in reputable research completed in 2019 by The Warren Centre. This research highlighted that the profession needed to lift its competence through improved education and training and proper accreditation processes. It seems that five years on, the call to action from The Warren Centre Review has been met with limited progress.

The registration framework for engineers in Victoria is a co-regulatory model under which competency standards and assessments of competency for FSEs are outsourced to Engineers Australia. This model calls into question the ability of the registration body to ensure that those given exclusivity to provide fire engineering services through registration are doing so competently and professionally.

This Review has found that FSEs rarely seek to have their work independently peer reviewed, despite their own professional association's guidance recommending that they do so. There is also clear evidence that some FSEs have previously and continue to accept appointments to undertake cladding risk assessments where they have a perceived or actual conflict of interest.

As part of its work, CSV developed its Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework, which was given legal authority through the issuing of Minister's Guideline 15 (MG-15) in September 2023. The Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework reflects the Victorian Government's policy position on the acceptable risks that are associated with combustible cladding on buildings. MG-15 must be considered by building surveyors undertaking cladding risk assessments. However, FSEs have largely refused to engage with this material when undertaking cladding risk assessments. This attitude is likely to, in part, be explained by CSV's decision to have minimal engagement with the profession during the development of some aspects of its Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework. A small number of FSEs and the professional associations raised vague criticisms about the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework, however they have chosen not to provide detailed and reasoned feedback to CSV or this Review on their specific concerns.

The contribution of professional associations to developing the competency of their members on cladding risk assessments through guidance and CPD events has been underwhelming. It is inevitable that when there are emerging highly political and emotional safety risks, governments and relevant experts need to 'find their feet' and work out how to respond. In the case of cladding, it seems that the fire safety engineering profession struggled to produce consistent and well-reasoned cladding risk assessments. They also resisted government efforts to develop a rectification standard.

It is hoped that this report provides FSEs and their professional associations with an opportunity for self-reflection and encourages its leadership to persist with continuous improvement.

This Review is also intended to offer learnings to other governments seeking to respond to unacceptable risks associated with combustible cladding on apartment buildings. In this regard we have made observations about the need for the data and information amassed during CSV's work to be put to ongoing use by regulators and for research into the practice of fire safety engineering. In addition, observations made in this Review highlight the risk that relying on FSEs or other consultants to advise building owners on the risks of combustible cladding by undertaking bespoke assessments may result in slow, inconsistent and overly conservative outcomes. It is appropriate and responsible for governments to establish policies on risk tolerance through the development of a rectification standard that FSEs and other building risk assessors must follow. CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework provides a robust example for other governments to draw from.



## Observations

### Observation 1

There has been a significant volume of cladding risk assessment work in Victoria since 2018. It is conservatively estimated that fire safety engineers prepared cladding risk assessment reports for over 1000 class 2 buildings for owners corporations, builders and CSV with an average of three to four reports prepared for each building. CSV alone spent \$9.3 million on fire safety engineering services as part of its program.

### Observation 2

Not all fire safety engineers providing cladding risk assessment services had experience in risk engineering and some struggled to provide these services competently. This observation was consistent with the profession's self-assessment in 2019 undertaken through The Warren Centre's work which identified significant variations in competency stemming from a lack of rigour in licensing procedures and poorly educated practitioners.

### Observation 3

The registration models for engineers around Australia rely heavily on Engineers Australia to set competency standards and assess competency for fire safety engineers.

It would be preferable if the governance model for registration of engineers provided for:

- government to have a more meaningful role in the development of competency standards and assessments and the content of engineering courses to ensure that the competency of engineers meets community expectations;
- there to be powers, resources and capability within the registration body to be able to proactively audit the conduct of engineers and respond promptly and effectively to complaints about engineers.

The Victorian Government should consider engaging with other jurisdictions to gauge interest in a more robust national governance model for the registration of engineers in Australia. The national framework for the registration of architects provides a superior example.

### Observation 4

It is inevitable that when there are emerging highly political and emotional safety risks, governments and relevant experts need to 'find their feet' and work out how to respond. In the case of cladding, the fire safety engineering profession struggled to efficiently provide consistent and rational cladding risk assessments and resisted attempts by government to develop a much-needed rectification standard in a timely manner.

## Observation 5

CSV's claims about the lack of consistency in approaches taken by fire safety engineers are not refuted by fire safety engineers or the professional associations who say that inconsistency is to be expected.

There was an inherent tension between the building-by-building bespoke assessment approach preferred by fire safety engineers and CSV's mandate to deliver a cladding rectification program in a timely, consistent and cost-effective manner.

The development of the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework allowed CSV to move to a more consistent and repeatable building assessment approach.

## Observation 6

Since the introduction of MG-15, municipal building surveyors have endorsed the remediation work plans provided to them by CSV in 87% of cases. This approach has allowed concerns about combustible cladding risk to finally be resolved for hundreds of apartment buildings.

A small number of municipal building surveyors are still paying for, or asking owners to pay for, a cladding risk assessment from a fire safety engineer for buildings where remediation works proposals have been provided by CSV. It is open to municipal building surveyors to take this approach. However, this imposes further costs on owners or ratepayers. This is unfortunate given the Minister has issued MG-15 and empowered CSV to assist councils resolve these issues using the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework.

## Observation 7

Most fire safety engineers who have undertaken cladding risk assessment work since the issuing of MG-15 and CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework have refused to meaningfully engage with or properly use this material. This is unacceptable. Further, there is evidence that some fire safety engineers have actively sought to undermine CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework in their dealings with stakeholders.

It would have provided more certainty and been preferable if the Victorian Government mandated the use of CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework by all building practitioners through regulatory amendments.

The Business Licensing Authority and Building and Plumbing Commission should issue guidance to fire safety engineers confirming the legal status of MG-15 and CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework and its direct relationship to their work when undertaking cladding risk assessments in Victoria. Such guidance should require fire safety engineers to apply MG-15 and CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework when undertaking cladding risk assessment work in Victoria.

Further, the SFS Guide should be withdrawn, or updated to refer to MG-15 and CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework and instruct that it be used in Victoria.

## Observation 8

CSV could have consulted more with fire safety engineers during the development of its Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework. Its failure to do so has contributed to animosity between CSV and some fire safety engineers.

However, it is not professional for fire safety engineers to ignore, refuse to apply or seek to undermine MG-15 and CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework.



## Observation 9

Criticisms about the substance of CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework raised during this Review have been vague or unfounded. The full suite of these materials has been publicly available since February 2024 and yet no fire safety engineers or any of the professional associations have provided written or verbal feedback to CSV articulating their concerns.

## Observation 10

There is clear evidence that the fire safety engineering profession and its professional associations have not understood their obligations regarding conflict of interest when it comes to undertaking cladding risk assessments.

The Business Licensing Authority, Building and Plumbing Commission, Engineers Australia and other relevant professional associations should issue guidance on this issue as a matter of priority. They should also consider adopting the National Model Code of Conduct for Fire Safety Engineers published by the Australian Building Codes Board or a similar code of conduct tailored to the role and conduct of fire safety engineers.

## Observation 11

The contribution of Engineers Australia, the Society of Fire Safety and the Society of Fire Protection Engineering to improving the fire safety engineering profession's competency, management of conflicts of interest and to supporting the objectives of the Victorian Government to deliver an efficient and effective cladding remediation program has been underwhelming.

Further, it would appear that very little, if any, attempt was made by these bodies to gather and represent the views of their members more broadly in responding to this Review.

## Observation 12

A register of apartment buildings that have been reviewed as part of CSV's cladding remediation program should be established to support ongoing regulatory activities including to supervise ongoing compliance with fire safety system maintenance requirements in these buildings. The register should be accessible by agencies such as the Building and Plumbing Commission, local councils and Fire Rescue Victoria.

Fire Rescue Victoria should also have access to this information to inform their emergency response, should there be future fire events in any of these buildings.

### **Observation 13**

CSV's data base of cladding risk assessment reports and associated building permit and design documents should be made available for academic research projects to study the methodology and approach used by fire safety engineers with the aim to identify opportunities for professional development and improved performance by fire safety engineers.

The commissioning of such research is warranted, given the key role fire safety engineers play in public safety outcomes for our built environment and the concerns raised both in The Warren Centre research and in this Review about the professionalism and competency of the profession.

### **Observation 14**

Other jurisdictions in Australia and overseas that support building owners to understand and address the risks of combustible cladding ought to prioritise the issuing of a government approved rectification standard that provides their communities with confidence that all buildings, including those with any residual cladding, will meet an agreed level of acceptable risk.

Such a standard should be developed by government policy makers with appropriate advice from a range of experts ensuring the roles and responsibilities of each party are clearly articulated.

CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework provides a robust, evidence-based example for others to consider and adopt with modifications as appropriate.



## Part A –

# Introduction

## 1. Terms of reference for this Review

This Review was commissioned by CSV. It is one of several reports that CSV has published to reflect on learnings from its work and offer suggestions for reform or improvement.

The Review examined the role of the fire safety engineering profession in response to the inappropriate use of combustible cladding on apartment buildings in Victoria.

The Terms of Reference for the Review are found in [Appendix 1](#). The issues for examination are:

- Issue #1:** The ability of the FSE profession to responsibly support consumers and government to resolve the systemic issues that have arisen from the inappropriate use of combustible cladding.
- Issue #2:** The engagement of FSEs by OCs and their levels of satisfaction with the fire safety engineering services provided.
- Issue #3:** The extent to which the FSE profession acted reasonably and/or consistently in:
- (a) applying a risk assessment methodology;
  - (b) determining remediation solutions;
  - (c) relying on scientific research;
  - (d) applying peer review; and
  - (e) providing risk based solutions.
- Issue #4:** The response of FSEs to MG-15 and associated documents and their willingness to apply or advise clients on its use in favour of applying bespoke assessments.
- Issue #5:** The professionalism of FSEs including in relation to:
- (a) perceived or actual conflicts of interest;
  - (b) engagement with relevant stakeholders; and
  - (c) engagement with owners.
- Issue #6:** The extent to which continuing professional development (CPD) activities relevant to the provision of FSE services for the rectification of buildings with combustible cladding was made available and the role of professional associations in supporting relevant CPD.

## 2. About the Reviewer

Weir Legal and Consulting (WLC) have advised various clients on issues in connection with combustible cladding. Bronwyn Weir co-authored the Building Confidence Report,<sup>1</sup> which was commissioned by all state and territory governments and the federal government in the wake of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. WLC gave advice to the Victorian Cladding Taskforce (VCT). WLC also advised the Building and Plumbing Commission (BPC, formerly the VBA) in relation to various matters including the Statewide Cladding Audit Program (SCA) and appearing for the BPC in over 100 proceedings before the Building Appeals Board (BAB) where OCs were seeking determinations to approve cladding remediation proposals.

Until being commissioned for this report, WLC has not acted for or provided advice to CSV.

## 3. Approach to the Review

- 3.1** The Review involved an examination of materials provided by CSV in relation to its program, including cladding risk assessments for approximately 48 buildings. 30 stakeholder interviews were conducted with approximately 51 individuals over approximately 33 hours. These stakeholders included:
- (a) FSEs and fire safety engineering firms;
  - (b) professional associations – Engineers Australia and its technical society, the Society of Fire Safety (SFS), the Society of Fire Protection Engineers (SFPE) and the Institution of Fire Engineers Australia (IFEA);
  - (c) apartment owners, OCs and OCMs;
  - (d) local government – the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV);<sup>2</sup>
  - (e) state government entities – the BPC, the Office of the State Building Surveyor, Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV), the Business Licensing Authority and Consumer Affairs Victoria; and
  - (f) representatives from CSV.
- 3.2** Meetings were generally by our invitation. Written submissions were also received from a small number of the above stakeholders.
- 3.3** Our initial invitations for interviews were sent to a group of 11 fire safety engineering firms. The list was proposed by CSV as reflecting the engineers and firms that CSV were aware had been involved in providing post-construction cladding risk assessment services in relation to class 2 buildings in Victoria.
- 3.4** Seven firms accepted invitations to meet and one provided a written submission. Three firms elected not to participate. Of these, two declined to participate and one did not respond. These three firms are known to have provided a large amount of cladding risk assessment services in Victoria.
- 3.5** Most interviews with stakeholders were transcribed or recorded. Some stakeholders did not consent to recordings so notes were taken instead. Throughout this report, anonymous quotes from comments made during interviews are set out in distinct text boxes.
- 3.6** In relation to our meeting with the IFEA, it said that it was unwilling to respond to the issues in the terms of reference as it would not assume an IFEA position without seeking the views of its members. It was agreed that IFEA would circulate the Terms of Reference to its members and invite them to make a submission to us. We did not receive any submissions from that process but assume that some of those we interviewed would be IFEA members.

<sup>1</sup> February 2018, Shergold and Weir, [Building Confidence report – Improving the effectiveness of compliance and enforcement systems for the building and construction industry across Australia](#) (accessed 17 September 2025).

<sup>2</sup> The Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group was invited to participate but declined.



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## 4. Structure of the Report

This report consists of the following Parts:

- PART A**           Introductory comments.
- PART B**           Background and context for the report, where a brief history of the Victorian Government response to the risks associated with combustibile cladding is set out with a specific focus on the role of FSEs connected with this work.
- PART C**           Consideration of each of the six issues for Review set out in the Terms of Reference and recommendations made in relation to those issues.
- PART D**           Additional Observations relating to ongoing use of data held by CSV and the importance of developing a rectification standard to underpin government supported cladding risk assessment and remediation programs.

## Part B –

# Background and context

## 5. The Victorian Cladding Taskforce and Statewide Cladding Audit Program

- 5.1** Following the fire at Grenfell Tower in London on 14 June 2017, the Victorian Government established the Victorian Cladding Taskforce (VCT). The VCT was tasked to investigate the extent of non-compliant external wall cladding on buildings in Victoria and make recommendations to ensure safety issues were being addressed appropriately.
- 5.2** The VCT issued an interim report in November 2017<sup>3</sup> and a final report in July 2019.<sup>4</sup> FSEs were engaged by VCT to advise it on its work. A risk assessment tool (RAT) was developed to support the Statewide Cladding Audit (SCA). The audit methodology developed by VCT provided for an Advisory Reference Panel (ARP) comprising a FSE, a fire brigade representative and a building surveyor to assess the safety risks for each building audited. The VCT also tasked its panel of experts to assist it in developing a standard for rectification. The standard was intended to provide guidance to regulators, building owners and practitioners as to what risk mitigation measures would be required to eliminate or reduce risks posed by the presence of combustible cladding.<sup>5</sup>
- 5.3** At the time the VCT's final report was issued, the Victorian Government announced that CSV would be established to administer funding allocated by the Government to rectify combustible cladding on privately owned residential apartment buildings and government buildings.<sup>6</sup>

3 Victorian Cladding Taskforce Interim Report, November 2017 [https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/90412/Victorian-Cladding-Taskforce-Interim-Report-November-2017.pdf](https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/90412/Victorian-Cladding-Taskforce-Interim-Report-November-2017.pdf) (accessed 17 September 2025).

4 Victorian Cladding Taskforce, Report from the Co-Chairs, July 2019. <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-04/Victorian-Cladding-Taskforce-Report-from-the-Co-Chairs-July-2019.pdf> (accessed 17 September 2025).

5 VCT Interim Report (n 3), p 18.

6 Media release, 16 July 2019 <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/tackling-high-risk-cladding-keep-victorians-safe> (accessed 17 September 2025).



## 6. Post Victorian Cladding Taskforce

- 6.1** The administration of the SCA was transferred to the BPC in 2018. The RAT and ARP methodology was applied to the audit of over 1800 residential buildings. In many cases the ARPs made recommendations to local government municipal building surveyors (MBS) to issue building notices asking owners to show cause why combustible cladding should not be removed. OCs were encouraged to engage an FSE to advise them on how to respond to the notices. FSEs were also engaged by OCs where they were concerned about combustible cladding on their buildings or considering commencing legal proceedings to seek compensation from builders or others.
- 6.2** A number of the FSEs who sat on ARPs were engaged directly – either as individuals or through their firms – by OCs to advise on cladding risk assessments or potential compensation claims. This was considered acceptable provided the FSE or someone from their firm had not participated in the ARP process for that building.
- 6.3** The BPC became the MBS for almost 400 of the highest risk buildings.<sup>7</sup> In its role as the MBS, the BPC engaged a fire safety engineering firm to assist it to develop a standard for cost-effective and proportionate risk reduction measures. The feedback given to the BPC by the FSEs was that a standardised approach could not be developed and that bespoke assessments of each building by an FSE were required.
- 6.4** One of the recommendations made by the VCT in its final report was “that if rectification is to be achieved through partial removal of cladding and a performance solution, the solution be independently approved by the Building Appeals Board.”<sup>8</sup>
- 6.5** More than 150 proceedings have been initiated in the Building Appeals Board (BAB) seeking a determination that proposals to partially or fully retain combustible cladding were acceptable. Those cases typically involved the filing of large amounts of materials including cladding risk assessment reports prepared by FSEs.<sup>9</sup>
- 6.6** In addition to the almost 400 buildings transferred to the BPC to act as MBS, over 1,000 moderate and low risk buildings remained under the jurisdiction of council MBSs. The BPC issued non-technical guidance to councils on how to manage and assess these buildings so that any necessary works could be carried out to mitigate risks and enable any notices or orders on those buildings to be lifted.<sup>10</sup> The guidelines called for procedures and practices to be followed to assess buildings and document decision making. In most cases, the MBS encouraged OCs to engage FSEs to undertake assessments.

<sup>7</sup> Pursuant to section 10 of the *Building Act 1993* (Vic).

<sup>8</sup> VCT Report (n 4), recommendation 15, p 7, 20, 32, 35, 36 and 41.

<sup>9</sup> The Board’s Practice Note on Proceedings concerning combustible external wall materials issued in 2021 set out options for seeking determinations and what materials would need to be filed by applicants. Building Appeals Board Practice Note 7, July 2021 [https://www.buildingappeals.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/133622/Practice-Note-7-2021-Proceedings-concerning-combustible-external-wall-materials.pdf](https://www.buildingappeals.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/133622/Practice-Note-7-2021-Proceedings-concerning-combustible-external-wall-materials.pdf) (accessed 24 July 2025).

<sup>10</sup> BPC’s acquittal guidelines <https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/consumers/statewide-cladding-audit> (accessed 17 September 2025).

## 7. Cladding Safety Victoria and the Victorian Cladding Rectification Program

- 7.1** CSV was established in late 2019 as a business unit within the BPC. The *Cladding Safety Victoria Act 2020* came into force on 1 December 2020 under which CSV became a statutory body.
- 7.2** The statutory functions of CSV are to administer the cladding rectification program, including:<sup>11</sup>
- (a) prioritising buildings for potential financial assistance for cladding rectification work;
  - (b) monitoring cladding rectification work where financial assistance has been given and support owners to undertake cladding rectification works;
  - (c) facilitating cladding rectification work for government buildings;
  - (d) providing information, advice and support to owners, OCs and other stakeholders; and
  - (e) notifying appropriate regulators, municipal building surveyors, persons and bodies about matters relating to compliance and enforcement.
- 7.3** To date, CSV has been involved in the assessment of over 6,750 buildings including 1,657 privately owned multi-unit residential (class 2) buildings. Table 1 shows how these buildings have been acquitted through funded remediation or otherwise.

**Table 1: Buildings assessed by CSV**

<b>Total Buildings assessed by CSV</b>	
Class 2	4,947
Class 3	116
Class 9	1,038
Government Program	649
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,750</b>
<b>Class 2 buildings with combustible cladding</b>	
Funded – Unacceptable risk	450
Elevated risk	179
Discharged (either low risk or no funded works)	1,028
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,657</b>

<sup>11</sup> Section 7 of the *Cladding Safety Victoria Act 2020* (Vic).



- 7.4** From the outset CSV sought to apply a risk based approach to its work. CSV's research report "*Victoria's cladding program: managing rectification costs to drive performance*" provides details of the frameworks and protocols developed by CSV to underpin its work. For the purposes of this report we refer to this material as the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework. Key documents that make up the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework are the:
- (a) Cladding Risk Prioritisation Model (CRPM) – which sets out the methodology for the assessment of risk for residential apartment buildings to ensure that the buildings with the highest cladding fire risk were subject to funding decisions for rectification works;
  - (b) Protocols for Mitigating Cladding Risk (PMCR) – which contains the rectification standard for the how to mitigate cladding risk through full or targeted cladding removal, enhanced fire safety upgrades or a combination of both;
  - (c) A series of research reports and policies on:
    - (i) cladding and materials;
    - (ii) external fire threats to cladding;
    - (iii) balcony fires;
    - (iv) risks and benefits associated with intervention solutions; and
    - (v) the impacts of sprinkler protection on buildings with an elevated risk.
  - (d) Reports on the five categories of interventions that are used under the framework to reduce cladding safety risk; and
  - (e) Implementation procedures for undertaking assessments and developing remediation work proposals.
- 7.5** The development of the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework was informed by:
- (a) outcomes of the CSV and BPC research and other relevant research;
  - (b) information collected from cladding risk assessment reports on several hundred buildings; and
  - (c) the remediation works overseen and funded by CSV.
- 7.6** The Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework considers cladding risk having regard to fire dynamics, regulatory impact, deliverability and cost. Given the breadth of issues that inform the risk based approach it was necessary for CSV to create a multi-disciplinary team to develop the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework This included FSEs, building surveyors, façade engineers and researchers employed or engaged by CSV. The proposed methodology for the PMCR was also sent to two international FSEs for peer review and comment.
- 7.7** All materials making up the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework are published on CSV's website including the reports from the peer reviewers and CSV's responses to those reports. These responses were prepared whilst this Review was being carried out in response to questions raised about the involvement of the peer reviewers.

## 8. The role of FSEs in relation to cladding

- 8.1** As of May 2025, there are 313 registered FSEs in Victoria. 291 of these hold a building endorsement, meaning they provide services in the building industry. These numbers have steadily increased from about 70 in 2007 and 145 in 2015.
- 8.2** FSEs have had several roles in relation to the use of combustible cladding. Many were involved in the design of buildings on which non-compliant combustible cladding was installed. A much smaller number have been involved in the post-construction cladding assessment and remediation work that has arisen.
- 8.3** Whilst this report is focused on the role of FSEs in cladding risk assessment and post construction advice, it is relevant to briefly refer to the role of FSEs in the design of buildings with combustible cladding.

### Role of FSEs in building design

- 8.4** CSV's report "*Compliance in Building Design*" was based on detailed analysis of over 1000 buildings from which CSV considered it had enough material for 804 to make a compliance determination. That report concluded that 140 FSEs had been involved in preparing fire safety engineering reports for 603 of the 804 buildings reviewed. According to CSV, 82% of those 140 FSEs (i.e. 113) had prepared fire safety engineering design on buildings which had non-compliant cladding. Buildings the subject of the report were designed before 2015, meaning that the vast majority of FSEs registered during that time were involved with buildings where non-compliance cladding was used.<sup>12</sup>
- 8.5** Some FSEs continue to strongly reject any suggestion that they were responsible for non-compliant cladding being on buildings. This was affirmed in submissions made to this Review. The FSEs say that prior to the Lacrosse and Grenfell fires, when engaged to prepare fire safety engineering reports for new buildings, their brief is limited to preparing performance solutions for issues specified by the relevant building surveyor. Although they may have been provided with drawings for the proposed buildings which specified that ACP or EPS cladding would be used, they say it was not up to them to consider proposed cladding products or raise concerns about the proposed use of combustible products. Some also argue that because their fire safety engineering reports contained a standard condition that cladding be non-combustible, this absolved them from any liability if combustible cladding was installed.
- 8.6** Similar arguments were raised by Thomas Nicolas, the fire safety engineering firm involved in the legal proceedings that followed the Lacrosse cladding fire. VCAT did not accept these arguments. VCAT said there was a disconnect between how the FSE viewed their role and the obligations it had under the consultancy agreement, which included a requirement that there be a 'full engineering assessment'. VCAT noted evidence that Thomas Nicolas was aware that ACP was proposed to be used, that ACP with a polyethylene core was widely used at the time and that it did not comply with the DTS provisions of the BCA.<sup>13</sup> In those circumstances VCAT found that the FSE ought to have done more to raise concerns about the proposed use of ACP to ensure an appropriate product was used.
- 8.7** It is important to highlight that the responsibility for cladding being installed on the Lacrosse building was found to rest with all three of the consultants on the project. The outcome of the Lacrosse case was that the FSE was apportioned 39% of the liability for damages, the relevant building surveyor 33%, the architects 25% and the remaining 3% was allocated to the person who caused the fire.<sup>14</sup>

12 <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-02/Research-Analysis-Compliance-in-Building-Design.pdf> (accessed 17 September 2025).

13 *Owners Corporation No. 1 of PS613436T v LU Simon Builders Pty Ltd (Building and Property)* [2019] VCAT 286, paragraphs [467] and [482] – [483].

14 The fire was caused by a cigarette butt left in a plastic yoghurt container on a timber table.



- 8.8 This outcome reflects the Tribunal’s view that the FSE had a relatively higher proportion of responsibility for the losses that occurred given their expertise and knowledge about the fire safety risks. At the relevant time, the Building Regulations required all registered building practitioners (including FSEs) to carry out their work in a competent manner and to a professional standard.<sup>15</sup> It is arguable that notwithstanding that the Lacrosse decision turned on the particular terms of the consultancy agreement, the fire safety engineering profession had an overarching obligation to apply a holistic approach to the provision of their services, rather than be blinkered by only looking at what the relevant building surveyor told them to.
- 8.9 It is unfortunate that some in the profession continue to deny accountability for their role in combustible cladding being inappropriately used on thousands of buildings. One might question how the profession can learn from mistakes if they are not willing to admit that mistakes were made.
- 8.10 The attitude of the fire safety engineering profession may reflect the lack of disciplinary action taken against FSEs in relation to the inappropriate use of combustible cladding. The table below shows information from the public registers of disciplinary action taken against practitioners relating to the use of combustible cladding.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 2: Disciplinary actions taken since 2020 in relation to the non-compliance use of combustible cladding**

	Building Surveyors	Fire Safety Engineers	Architects	Draftspersons
Number of practitioners involved in use of non-compliant combustible cladding <sup>17</sup>	111	113	172	61
Number of disciplinary actions	36	2	1	0
Number of practitioners	31	2	1	0
Number of sites	86	2	1	0

15 *Building Regulations 1994 (Vic)* - reg 15.2; *Building Regulations 2006 (Vic)*- reg 1502 and *Building Regulations 2018 (Vic)* - reg 265.

16 At the relevant time, the BPC was responsible for disciplinary actions against building surveyors, FSEs and draftspersons see <https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/tools/prosecution-and-disciplinary-register> (accessed 30 September 2025). The Architects Registration Board of Victoria is responsible for disciplinary action against architects. See <https://portal.arbv.vic.gov.au/disciplinary-information/> (accessed 30 September 2025)

17 <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-02/Research-Analysis-Compliance-in-Building-Design.pdf> (accessed 17 September 2025).

## Role of FSEs in cladding assessments post-construction

- 8.11** In addition to their role in the design of buildings, after the establishment of the VCT in 2017 and CSV in 2019, the role of FSEs in cladding risk assessments and advisory work post-construction of a building has been significant. This has included:
- (a) services to VCT to develop the risk assessment tool used in the SCA;
  - (b) services to the Department and then to the BPC to attempt to develop cladding rectification standards;
  - (c) advice on approximately 2,000 buildings through the ARP process;<sup>18</sup>
  - (d) being engaged by many hundreds of OCs to advise on cladding. As is discussed later, this commonly involved the preparation of several reports, especially if the owners made application to the BAB for approval to retain some or all of their combustible cladding;
  - (e) being commissioned by CSV to undertake due diligence and prepare cladding risk assessment reports to support its work; and
  - (f) services relating to materials and wall system testing and research commissioned by OCs, builders, the BPC and CSV.
- 8.12** CSV has reported that approximately 140 FSEs were involved in the design of 804 building with combustible cladding in Victoria. CSV estimates that the number of individual FSEs involved in the post-construction cladding assessment and rectification work for class 2 buildings is approximately 40.
- 8.13** CSV has reviewed cladding safety risk on 1,657 buildings in Victoria. Of these it is conservatively estimated that about 1000 would have been subject to a cladding risk assessment by a FSE.
- 8.14** CSV estimates that on average, for each building where an FSE was engaged by CSV or the owners, three to four versions of each cladding assessment report were prepared. This amounts to 3000 – 4000 reports prepared by FSEs. CSV spent \$9.3 million on fire safety engineering services. It is unknown how much OCs have spent on cladding risk assessment reports.
- 8.15** In our interviews with FSEs, some said that cladding risk assessments had occupied a large amount of their firm's workload for various periods of time over the past six years. Some firms employed multiple FSEs who were almost exclusively undertaking cladding risk assessment work in Victoria for some years. Some said they had reluctantly taken on some work in this area but had tried to limit it and often referred clients to others that they knew did high volumes of work in this area.

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## Observation 1

There has been a significant volume of cladding risk assessment work in Victoria since 2018. It is conservatively estimated that fire safety engineers prepared cladding risk assessment reports relating to over 1000 class 2 buildings for owners corporations, builders and CSV with an average of three to four reports prepared for each building. CSV alone spent \$9.3 million on fire safety engineering services as part of its program.

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<sup>18</sup> CSV's records show that 1831 class 2, 3 and 9 buildings and 266 government buildings were subject to an ARP assessment.



## Part C –

# Examination of issues identified in the Terms of Reference

**Issue #1:** The ability of the FSE profession to responsibly support consumers and government to resolve the systemic issues that have arisen from the inappropriate use of combustible cladding

## 9. CSV's views

- 9.1** CSV's view is that most FSEs who offered cladding risk assessment services in the early phase were not well equipped to do that work. They reported that the risk assessment reports they received with funding requests were often poorly written and did not identify accurately the cladding that was on the building. In many cases the FSE had not conducted a site visit and had based their assessment solely on a desktop review of building approval documents. Where a site visit had occurred, often the FSE had not taken any steps to determine the as-built wall makeups and on numerous occasions failed to identify all existing fire safety systems.
- 9.2** It became apparent to VCT early that a rectification standard was required to enable consistency in assessments and outcomes for customers.<sup>19</sup> VCT and the Department engaged FSEs, facade experts and building surveyors to assist with the development of a rectification standard. CSV reports that these attempts were unsuccessful. The lead experts engaged said this was not possible and that bespoke assessments of each building by FSEs were required.
- 9.3** CSV set out to develop a standardised reporting framework with the assistance of a fire safety engineering firm. This included due diligence, risk assessment, feasibility and solution-development templates. When the framework was put to CSV's panel of fire safety engineering firms to use, they refused, with each insisting on using their own templates and risk assessment approaches.
- 9.4** CSV says the fire safety engineering firms they engaged followed some agreed practices such as conducting site visits and aligning to a clear scope of work. However, reports coming to CSV from fire safety engineering firms engaged directly by OCs continued to be of variable quality.

<sup>19</sup> Victorian Cladding Taskforce Interim Report, November 2017 [https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/90412/Victorian-Cladding-Taskforce-Interim-Report-November-2017.pdf](https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/90412/Victorian-Cladding-Taskforce-Interim-Report-November-2017.pdf) (accessed 17 September 2025).

## 10. Feedback from FSEs

- 10.1** It was acknowledged by most FSEs that the capability of FSEs to provide cladding risk assessment services would have been limited in 2018, when the need for these services in Victoria escalated rapidly.
- 10.2** Some made the point that ‘risk engineering’, which is different to design engineering, is a competency that some FSEs would not have had. They said this would be one reason why many FSEs did not pursue cladding risk assessment work.
- 10.3** The following quotes on this issue are taken from the transcripts of interviews.

“ One of the problems is that fire safety engineers in Australia did not have a role in on-site inspections, so they were not trained. They don’t go to building sites, so overnight they went from never going to a site to having to make all of the decisions from site information. The profession was being asked to do things it didn’t previously do without clear enough instruction.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ Prior to major incidents like Grenfell (2017) and Lacrosse (2014), the understanding of external fire spread, and cladding risks was less developed. The FSE profession operated within a regulatory and knowledge framework that has since evolved significantly, as evidenced by CSV’s ongoing scientific research and fire testing as well as that of other research bodies and FSEs more generally.

FSEs typically apply performance-based design principles, which inherently involve various forms of risk assessments. But it must be noted that not all FSEs are experienced in pure risk assessment approaches.”

*Fire Safety Engineering Firm*

“ Cladding risk assessment is just not what fire engineers did. I mean fire engineers as a profession, deal with new buildings. The expectation is that the other consultants as part of the building process will design their buildings to comply and then fire engineers got thrown into this, a legacy issue. Most engineers had had no experience with Part 8 of the [Building] Act, so there was no framework, no process, and no acceptance criteria for them to work to. So I think at the start it was very fragmented because without any, you know overarching process, we all used the IFEG to deal with such buildings. I think I think a lot of people struggled. Over time we saw uplifts in quality and due diligence from fire safety engineers.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*



“ I think it’s easy to overtime, lose sight as to what’s CSV was looking to achieve and I think it is quite commendable that they were really very early to act in this space.

Even internationally, there wasn’t much being done in terms of trying to tackle these issues at a government level. I think CSV was an excellent initiative. They have really helped to try and pave the path for others.

I think it’s inherent that there were going to be inefficiencies and challenges and retrospective learnings given that they were really forging their own way here. Yeah, I think you know, the CSV scheme and what it set out to achieve is commendable and unappreciated.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ Fire Safety Engineering is not a consolidated united profession. I am not even sure fire safety engineering is a true profession. Certainly it is true that fire engineering is what we call an immature engineering profession. Immature in the legal sense. So it’s new, it’s emerging, it’s still finding its way and that’s why I think this review is so important.

So it’s a brand new profession that is still maturing and then a cladding crisis came along – so imagine a teenager dealing with COVID. That’s probably a good parallel for what this is like. It’s too much.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ I think the government was naive to think fire engineers could solve these problems at the level they expected and fire engineers were not honest enough in reply about what their limitations were. I think both of those things are true.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ Any significant disruption to an industry or profession has teething problems through that period, and one of the problems I observed is that the VBA did not get on with Cladding Safety Victoria, Cladding Safety Victoria did not get on with the Building Appeals Board and if those three bodies had worked together, they could have resolved this with much less private sector engineering involvement.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

## 11. The Warren Centre Research into Fire Safety Engineering

- 11.1** A number of stakeholders referred to the work done by The Warren Centre in 2019 in relation to the fire safety engineering profession.<sup>20</sup> This work is relevant to this Review as it looked at the state of the fire safety engineering profession in Australia in 2019 and developed plans for how to improve competency and professionalism.
- 11.2** The objective of The Warren Centre project was to address many of the major challenges facing government, regulatory authorities and practitioners in relation to fire safety engineering and community safety in buildings.
- 11.3** We note that whilst there are references in the nine published reports to combustible cladding issues and recent cladding fire events, The Warren Centre's work is focused on the role of the FSE in design. It does not directly address the emerging work in relation to cladding risk assessments or the skills and ability of FSEs to undertake post occupation risk engineering.
- 11.4** The *Education Report* looked at the status of education and training of FSEs and competencies which are expected of a fire safety engineering professional. The *Education Report* states:
- a number of reports and inquiries referenced in the Education Report are said to call for the re-examination of the role of FSEs and to lift their competence through improved education and training and proper accreditation processes;<sup>21</sup>
  - that recent façade fires illustrate the pitfalls and dangers of continuing as the discipline has done for so long and that continuing with the status quo will have disastrous results for the profession as well as for society and the built environment;
  - there is no agreed definition of what the attributes and skills of a professional FSE are;
  - there are no accredited degree programs for fire safety engineering which means that when a person seeks to have their expertise recognised through accreditation there needs to be an assessment of the knowledge of each applicant rather than being able to rely on completion of a degree focused on the discipline of fire safety engineering. This was described as making the field more of a regulated trade rather than a profession; and
  - there is a shortage of FSEs with insufficient new graduates and a lack of more senior leaders and managers.
- 11.5** The *Education Report* notes that in Australia the assessment of qualifications and experience for FSEs is primarily done by either Engineers Australia or IFEA. The report notes that despite the National Engineers Register (administered by EA) having a category for fire safety engineering for more than 20 years, neither Engineers Australia or IFEA have full and proper competencies against which to judge professional practice. They have been using a simple knowledge based criteria as a basis for assessment through a report and interview process. The *Education Report* concludes:

*"All of the above contributes to significant variations in the level of competence of Fire Safety Engineers available for any particular project. This situation is illustrative of the situation described by Woodrow et al. A lack of rigour in licensing procedures results in the utilisation of poorly educated practitioners to fill available positions. Further, enabling these engineers to practice professionally in an apparently regulated environment contributes to a professional hubris with many practitioners arguably practising outside of their own competence."*

<sup>20</sup> The Warren Centre Reports are published on the BPC's website <https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/about/research/improve-the-education-and-professional-competency-of-fire-safety-engineers> (accessed 17 September 2025).

<sup>21</sup> The Warren Centre, Fire Safety Engineering, Regulation, Education Report, p 10.



## 12. Response from professional associations

### The SFS Guide

- 12.1** The Society of Fire Safety issued a Practice Guide for the assessment of combustible cladding in March 2019 (SFS Guide).<sup>22</sup> The objective of the SFS Guide is to “provide a fire risk assessment methodology for suitably qualified and competent professionals to determine the potential hazard of fire spread via the facade of existing buildings.”
- 12.2** The SFS advised that the Guide was developed via a process that ensured all members had a chance to provide comment on drafts. A subcommittee drafted the Guide and comments from members were considered by the executive to ensure that proper regard was had to all feedback.
- 12.3** The SFS Guide has been widely used and referenced as the favoured approach to cladding risk assessments. Professional indemnity insurance providers required FSEs to apply the SFS Guide when undertaking cladding risk assessments.
- 12.4** The SFS Guide was a contribution by the profession to guide FSEs to conduct cladding risk assessments. However, the general consensus of the FSEs interviewed for this Review was that the SFS Guide was of limited use as it did not provide guidance on how to assess risk. It was noted that this was never its intention, and the document was a ‘guide’ not a rectification standard. It contemplates that ‘States and Territories have and potentially will develop their own guides, regulations, Ministers guidelines, etc, which where present, should be followed in their entirety and would take precedence.’
- 12.5** It is also noted that the SFS Guide has not been updated since it was published in 2019, despite the publications that have now been issued by CSV and the issuing of MG-15 two years ago which are clearly relevant to cladding risk assessments.
- 12.6** The FSEs interviewed said whilst they were aware of and used the SFS Guide, they did so because they had to. Most had their own way of doing assessments and preferred to use their own matrices and terminologies for assessing risk. FSEs from large fire safety engineering firms said that they were required to use their firm’s own policies and procedures when conducting and documenting cladding risk assessments.

“ I used [the SFS Guide] where it was appropriate. I thought it was actually helpful, but again [it] didn’t deal with the real issue, which is that we have to have some guidance about where compliance points are for that Guide to work.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ [The] SFS Guide is something we did adopt very early. It was a little vague. It’s kind of like, just remember you need to do SFAIRP and then apply your engineering judgment to do that ...

In theory it could have been more beneficial if there was engagement between, like heavy engagement between SFS and the VBA and government bodies. I don’t know, but you get too many people in a room and everyone has an opinion and it’s not constructive.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

<sup>22</sup> Engineers Australia, Society of Fire Safety Practice Guide Façade/External wall Fire Safety Design, 7 March 2019 [https://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/Learned%20Society/SFS\\_Facade%20Fire%20Safety%20Design\\_002\\_0.pdf](https://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/Learned%20Society/SFS_Facade%20Fire%20Safety%20Design_002_0.pdf) (accessed 17 September 2025).

## Capability of the profession to respond to cladding crisis

- 12.7** In response to the question of whether the profession had the ability to support the government to respond to the cladding crisis, both SFS and SFPE said that risk engineering was a core skill of FSEs and that there were FSEs who were well equipped to provide cladding risk assessment services.
- 12.8** SFS said that FSEs were intelligent, competent and capable and that there has been plenty of CPD on these issues. However, SFS also acknowledged that the cladding issues emerged quite suddenly and the FSEs could not have been expected to be fully equipped to respond given this was a new issue. SFS said that you cannot upskill people on an issue you don't know is coming.
- 12.9** SFS and SFPE also pointed out that a large number of Australia's FSEs had migrated to Australia having been trained in Europe or the USA where the education for FSEs is much more available and advanced.

“ Risk isn't new to fire engineers. The cladding in some ways, yes, but fire engineers have been doing risks in a variety of industries for a very long time, and understanding this, I imagine for some companies that may have been a steeper curve than for other companies.”

*Society of Fire Safety*

## Education and competency assessment

- 12.10** Engineers Australia and SFS confirmed that since The Warren Centre's work there had been no improvements in educational courses for FSEs in Australia. Engineers Australia confirmed that currently there is no Washington Accord recognised course for fire safety engineering in Australia. In its written submission it said:
- “The provision of and viability of any undergraduate course is predicated on awareness of the discipline, interest to enrol and academic expertise to teach. Research shows that engineering, as a whole, remains poorly understood by high school students. Fire Safety Engineering is a niche area that does not have mainstream visibility. Engineers Australia is aware of efforts by a number of universities several years ago to garner support for additional courses, without success.”*
- 12.11** Engineers Australia advised that although the competency assessment framework published by The Warren Centre has not been formally adopted, it is used in practice when fire safety engineers are having their competencies assessed for registration.
- 12.12** Engineers Australia also pointed out that until recently, fire safety engineering was not listed as a skilled occupation under the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA). The OSCA is issued by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to gather and report on data about the job market for skilled occupations. FSEs were classified under 'Engineering Professionals Not Elsewhere Classified'. In 2024 a specific code for Fire Safety Engineering in the OSCA was created on the recommendation of Engineers Australia. This will allow for data about the profession to be gathered and will also support immigration of FSEs to Australia.



## Engineers registration scheme

- 12.13** The engineers registration schemes in Australia are based on co-regulation with professional associations. They provide for professional associations to be approved to determine competency frameworks and assess applicants for registration and renewal of registration against those frameworks. In practice this model outsources competency assessments to Engineers Australia. Whilst other professional associations are also approved, Engineers Australia does all of the assessments of competency for fire safety engineers in Victoria.
- 12.14** In Victoria the registration scheme for engineers is administered by the Business Licensing Authority who also registers businesses such as real estate agents, motor car traders, conveyancers and debt collectors.
- 12.15** The governance model for the registration of engineers is to be contrasted with the registration of architects. Under that model, each state and territory has an Architects Registration Board. The Boards have representation from the profession, industry, academia and consumers. Each Board has a registrar. In 1970, the Boards established the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA) whose Board has representation from the registrars, Registration Boards and from the profession to create a quasi-regulatory body. The AACA has several functions. It establishes standards of competency, develops a competency based assessment for determining eligibility for registration as an architect, and runs the accreditation procedure for architectural courses. The AACA also facilitates international mutual recognition agreements and collates data on the profession of architecture. Through this governance model, government representatives have oversight of the content of architecture degrees and sets the competency pathways for becoming an architect. It can also influence changes to course content and assessments having regard to emerging issues.

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## 13. Analysis and observations

- 13.1** The views of CSV about the capability of the profession to respond to the cladding crisis are reflected in the views that FSE have about their own profession. Whilst SFS and SFPE were quick to argue that FSEs were equipped with risk engineering skills and were able to offer cladding risk assessment services, they also agreed that not everyone had those skills when the cladding crisis began. The Warren Centre's work also aligns to the experience of CSV. It highlights the shortage of FSEs and courses to create them. It also concludes that there is no agreed definition of the attributes and skills of a professional FSE.

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### Observation 2

Not all fire safety engineers providing cladding risk assessment services had experience in risk engineering and some struggled to provide these services competently. This observation was consistent with the profession's self-assessment in 2019 undertaken through The Warren Centre's work which identified significant variations in competency stemming from a lack of rigour in licensing procedures and poorly educated practitioners.

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- 13.2** In relation to the registration of engineers, we note a recent paper published on registration and licensing of fire safety engineers in the UK.<sup>23</sup> The paper says that despite recommendations to the UK government in the 1980s that engineers should be both registered and licensed, this did not occur. Around the same time, the UK was moving to an outcomes-based building code that would rely heavily on the competence of fire safety engineers. The authors argue that, had registration and licensing of fire safety engineers been introduced in the 80s, this may have resulted in improved competence of the profession. They highlight that in addition to setting minimum standards of competency, registration and licensing can act as a strong performance incentive because a poorly performing engineer can have their registration revoked by the registration body.
- 13.3** In Australia, at the time the performance based building code was introduced in the mid-1990s, Victoria and Queensland registered fire safety engineers. This was followed by Tasmania. More recently, NSW, ACT, WA and SA are or will be establishing schemes for the registration of engineers. Following the points highlighted by the UK paper, in order for these schemes to be effective there needs to be a mechanism to ensure that those registered hold the requisite skills and competencies. There also needs to be a robust regulator with the powers, skills and resources to proactively audit engineers and suspend or cancel the registration of those who lack competency or engage in poor conduct.
- 13.4** As noted above, the registration bodies in Australia outsource the setting of competency standards and their assessment predominantly to Engineers Australia. It is not clear whether there are adequate resources available to those bodies to audit the approved assessment bodies to ensure that their process and procedures for competency assessment are adequate and being followed. The registration bodies also need people available to it with engineering skills and experience in all registered disciplines of engineering, so that they can assess and respond to complaints effectively.
- 13.5** In Victoria, disciplinary action can be taken against an engineer by the BPC or Consumer Affairs Victoria. This action can result in reprimands, fines or loss or suspension of registration. It is not clear how the two bodies work together in relation to enforcement activity. Any complaint made via Consumer Affairs Victoria's website must be made through its general consumer complaints portal which presumes the complaint is about goods or services and that it can be resolved by a refund or replacement. It requires the complainant to have made attempts to resolve their complaint with the person first. This may not be appropriate when complaining about the professional conduct of an engineer.
- 13.6** There is no information published by Consumer Affairs Victoria on its compliance activity related to engineers and no published VCAT decisions involving engineers since the scheme commenced four years ago. The BPC's Prosecution and Disciplinary register lists three disciplinary actions against engineers since 2020, two are FSEs.
- 13.7** Engineers Australia also has a complaint handling system. It can investigate allegations of unacceptable conduct or breaches of its codes of ethics. Engineers Australia can only investigate its members. Where the complaint is upheld, outcomes can include warnings, reprimands or suspension or cancellation of membership. Registered engineers do not have to be members of Engineers Australia. If membership is cancelled this does not affect an engineer's registration.
- 13.8** CSV reported to us that in February 2025 it made a complaint about the conduct of a FSE to Engineers Australia. After CSV followed up with Engineers Australia on the progress of their complaint in April, they were mistakenly advised that the engineer in question was not a member of Engineers Australia. CSV is still awaiting an outcome of this complaint. A second complaint made to Engineers Australia, Consumer Affairs Victoria and BPC in June 2025 remains outstanding.

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<sup>23</sup> G Spindardi, A Law and L Bisby, 2025, Freedom without responsibility: How the UK Government ignored engineering competence whilst deregulating fire safety regulation in the 1980s, *Informa UK, trading as Taylor & Francis Group* <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/13619462.2025.2523943?needAccess=true> (accessed 17 September 2025).



- 13.9** A registration scheme that is not well resourced to respond promptly to complaints may be ineffective in ensuring those that have been given an exclusive right to provide engineering services are doing so competently. Given the highly technical nature of engineering, recipients of their services may not always know whether the engineer has acted competently. This makes proactive auditing of engineers essential if the registration scheme is to be effective at holding engineers to account when their competency or conduct is found to be poor.

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### Observation 3

The registration models for engineers around Australia rely heavily on Engineers Australia to set competency standards and assess competency for fire safety engineers.

It would be preferable if the governance model for registration of engineers provided for:

- government to have a more meaningful role in the development of competency standards and assessments and the content of engineering courses to ensure that the competency of engineers meets community expectations;
- there to be powers, resources and capability within the registration body to be able to proactively audit the conduct of engineers and respond promptly and effectively to complaints about engineers.

The Victorian Government should consider engaging with other jurisdictions to gauge interest in a more robust national governance model for the registration of engineers in Australia. The national framework for the registration of architects provides a superior example.

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- 13.10** In relation to the ability of the FSE profession to responsibly support consumers and government to resolve the systemic issues that have arisen from the inappropriate use of combustible cladding, we conclude that both CSV and FSEs believe the profession fell short in the early period. FSEs say improvements were made over time but CSV says their frustrations grew.
- 13.11** Whilst FSEs were looking for instruction and guidance from government, government was calling on the profession to assist it to develop that guidance. CSV engaged fire safety engineering firms to help it develop a framework for cladding risk assessments which was rejected by other FSEs. It also sought to continue the unsuccessful work started by VCT and the Department to develop a rectification standard, but it faced resistance, with FSEs insisting that a rectification standard was not possible. The RAT developed by VCT with the assistance of FSEs was extensively used in the SCA but also criticised by some as overstating the risks.
- 13.12** It has been suggested that FSEs were motivated to resist the creation of a rectification standard from the outset because this would mean they would no longer be required to undertake detailed and bespoke assessment of buildings. This question was raised with some of the FSEs we spoke to. They said that cladding risk assessment work was not profitable. They said that the professional indemnity insurance costs were very high and that OCs did not pay well for this work. Whilst these claims may be accurate, the statistics about the Statewide Cladding Audit and Cladding Rectification Program tell us that there was a significant volume of work in this area for a relatively small number of FSEs. As noted above, CSV alone spent \$9.3 million on fire safety engineering services. The BPC funded FSEs to sit on over 2000 ARP panels. In addition to this, OCs funded hundreds of cladding risk assessments. CSV arranged and funded professional indemnity insurance coverage for those FSEs providing services with respect to buildings funded by CSV for cladding rectification works.

**13.13** We also heard from some FSEs that the volume of cladding risk assessment work had dropped away over the past 12 – 18 months since MG-15 was issued. Whilst MG-15 was only ever intended to deal with the last of the unresolved buildings, which was initially thought to be around 350, had a rectification standard been developed earlier this would have reduced the volume of work for FSEs. It is difficult to conclude with any certainty that the reluctance of the profession to assist with the development of a rectification standard was motivated by their desire to generate work. If FSEs were grappling with how to undertake cladding risk assessments they would have been unlikely to have had the skills to develop a rectification standard. Further, the extensive research done to support the development of the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework and the learnings from reviewing hundreds of risk assessments and overseeing cladding rectification projects was essential to its development. Therefore we conclude the early advice from FSEs that the development of a rectification standard was not possible, was probably accurate.

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## Observation 4

It is inevitable that when there are emerging highly political and emotional safety risks, governments and relevant experts need to ‘find their feet’ and work out how to respond. In the case of cladding, the fire safety engineering profession struggled to efficiently provide consistent and rational cladding risk assessments and resisted attempts by government to develop a much-needed rectification standard in a timely manner.

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## Issue #2: The engagement of FSEs by owners corporations and their levels of satisfaction with the fire safety engineering services provided

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### 14. Interviews with OCs/OCMs

- 14.1** The OCs/OCMs with whom we spoke all referred to the impact of cladding on insurance premiums, saying this often drove decisions to resolve cladding risks. Even though they had had their cladding removed, it took longer to get the building signed off and to convince insurers to reduce their premiums. CSV advises that for the past two years, Australia’s largest OC insurance provider has agreed to remove any premium increases associated with combustible cladding if CSV and the MBS consider the risk to be acceptable.
- 14.2** OCs also spoke of owners having difficulty trying to sell their apartments because cladding issues remained unresolved for long periods of time. Owners were often distressed and confused about how the cladding had ended up on their building and why they had to pay to have it removed.



## OC CASE STUDY #1

The building owner paid \$17,000 for a fire safety engineering report from a firm that said all their ACP cladding would need to be removed. At the suggestion of the relevant council, the owners approached CSV. CSV came and did a very thorough inspection of the building before producing a report which said that, with some minor improvements to the alarm detection systems in affected SOUs, no cladding would need to be removed. The council agreed with CSV's advice. This owner was very happy with the service provided by CSV and annoyed that he had paid a FSE \$17,000 in the first place.

## OC CHAIR CASE STUDY #2

This building is a five-storey building with 88 apartments. The building is sprinklered. The wall cladding includes small amounts of decorative ACP panels and steel panels. The Statewide Cladding Audit rated the building as low risk. The OC was concerned about various defects and engaged lawyers who suggested the cladding be tested. It was discovered that the steel panels had EPS inside their casing. The OC commenced proceedings in VCAT in relation to the cladding and other defects. A fire safety engineer was engaged to assist with the legal proceedings and concluded that all combustible cladding needed to be removed. The estimated cost of removal was \$2.3 million.

The builder refused to engage with the proceedings over several months and eventually went into liquidation, bringing the proceeding to an end. By this time the OC had spent \$200,000 in legal fees.

After the legal proceedings ended, the OC asked the FSE for further advice. The FSE provided a further report concluding that some of the cladding could be retained if alarm systems were upgraded. This would cost about \$1 million.

The OC provided the fire safety engineer's report to the local council who passed it on to CSV. CSV inspected the site and obtained a full set of approved drawings which showed the wall makeup included concrete panels. This meant that the EPS within the steel panels was not continuous across SOUs. CSV also used Google Earth to obtain images of the building during construction which informed the understanding of the wall make-up. CSV concluded the cladding did not need to be removed. The MBS agreed with CSV assessment of the cladding.

When CSV became involved, the FSE told the OC that it did not agree with CSV's approach to cladding risk assessments and refused to adjust its opinion.

The building has defects relating to waterproofing, roof plumbing and unprotected penetrations which are likely to cost over \$1 million to rectify.

The OC has been dealing with these issues for over four years so far. They found their FSE to be helpful and good to deal with but were surprised when the FSE said CSV's model was wrong.

### OCM CASE STUDY #3

This OCM had dealt with various councils in relation to cladding issues on a number of buildings they managed. They said different MBSs dealt with cladding very differently which made it difficult. For some buildings this OCM managed, it was determined early that all cladding needed to be removed. This was done and reported to be a fairly straightforward process with CSV. For other buildings, the MBS would not make a decision, so the process was not as straightforward.

When asked how they found dealing with their FSE the OCM said "Yeah, fabulous. So supportive. I suppose he'd asked the right questions. He was a very much a professional, it's like if you had somebody that you needed a lawyer to discuss things with because you didn't have the capacity. He was very much like that and you know didn't waste time on silly things and silly details just straight to the point so it's really helpful to work with him."

For one particular building it was very hard to get a response from the relevant council. The OCM said they would deal with one person that would go on leave and no one else would be able to help them. They said they went around in circles and that council staff were often rude or unresponsive for months.

Their FSE helped them and eventually a proceeding was commenced in the BAB and the questions around cladding retention were resolved. However, the process was protracted because of delays with the council. The OC did not have to remove their cladding, but the FSE cost the OC about \$30-40,000.

### OCM CASE STUDY #4

The OC engaged a FSE to help them respond to a notice from the relevant council about different types of cladding on their building. Their FSE was very helpful and supportive. He told them they did not need to remove the cladding because of the design of the building and because it had sprinklers. The FSE told them to go to the BAB and wrote a report which was given to the BAB. During that process, the FSE said he thought they might meet the criteria for funding from CSV. CSV agreed to fund the cladding removal so the BAB proceeding was withdrawn.

The cladding removal cost \$2 million. Despite CSV funding, the owners had to pay \$700,000 because some of the cladding was timber and the removal process identified underlying waterproofing defects. The process to remove the cladding once CSV got involved was easy. The owners had to take out a strata loan for this work.

When it came to having the building signed off by the relevant council, it took a long time to get them to respond. When they did come to site, they identified more problems like unprotected penetrations. The OC tried to fix those issues as quickly as possible and eventually the building got signed off. The OC got some advice about whether they could take action against the builder or others. They elected not to take legal action. The owners just wanted to move on as the whole process had taken them about three years.



## OC CHAIR CASE STUDY #5

This MBS decided this building had unsafe cladding and emergency works were required within 48 hours or the building would be evacuated. The cladding was eventually removed and 54 other non-compliances identified that the owners had to pay to fix. It took over six and a half years for this OC to have all their issues resolved. The OC reported that the BPC, the relevant council and CSV were very disorganised with no processes or procedures. When the OC wrote to Ministers, they did not receive responses for up to 11 months.

Over the period the OC engaged three FSEs. The first was engaged early with a building surveyor to help the OC understand what was wrong with their building. After CSV funded removal of the cladding, the OC then received new defect reports from the BPC (acting as MBS). The second FSE was engaged to do a risk assessment and develop a performance solution in response to the BPC's reports. That FSE gave the OC 11 versions of the documentation for a performance solution which was ultimately rejected by the BPC. Finally, the OC went to the BAB, who also refused the FSE's performance solution.

The OC then engaged a third FSE who was able to work with the BPC to get the building approved. "He definitely worked well with our stakeholders. His communication was excellent. We had many site visits, and he was very inclusive. He applied a risk management methodology. He took the OC through different remedial solutions based on least invasive and least cost. At all times he applied a risk assessment methodology. I believe he worked well with the BPC at working towards a win-win solution."

The OC spent almost \$100,000 on lawyers trying to pursue the builder and others but none of them would accept responsibility. The builder became insolvent. The OC spent a further \$300,000 on engaging experts and resolving non-cladding defects.

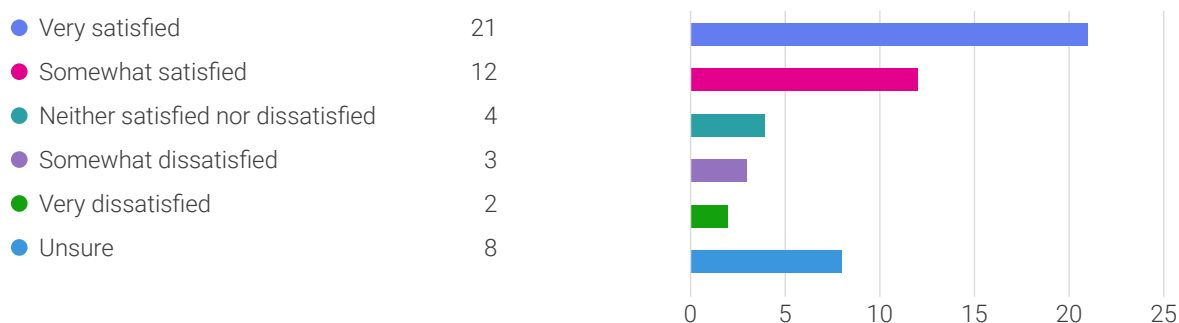
Over that six-and-a-half-year period, the owners' lives were on hold. No one could sell but many are now because they can't service the debt.

"Since that time, I believe CSV has done some really good things and created some strong working policies and guides. But we /I needed more direction and clarity at the time in 2018."

## 15. CSV survey of OCMs and OCs

- 15.1** CSV conducted a survey of OCMs and OCs in April 2025. 107 responses were received, almost equally distributed between OCMs and owners.
- 15.2** 90% of the respondents said their building was the subject of a building notice or order or emergency order. 43% of respondents said were able to speak to the right person at council and get the information they needed, whereas for 20% it was difficult to obtain a response from their council.
- 15.3** 62% of respondents reported that their building had defects other than cladding. 46% engaged an FSE to provide them with advice on their cladding with about half of those engaged through CSV and the other half engaging their FSE directly.
- 15.4** Questions about the engagement of FSEs were answered by 50 respondents and are summarised as follows:
- when asked how many reports their FSE produced, 23 did not know, 24 said less than five (48%);
  - when asked how much was paid to the FSE, 28 did not know, 13 said \$0 to \$20,000, five said \$20-40,000, 3 said \$40-60,000 and one said \$60-100,000;
  - when asked whether the FSE's report were provided in a timely manner, 22 said always, eight said sometimes, four said rarely and three said never. The remaining 13 did not know;
  - 31 respondents were always able to clearly understand the FSE's report with only one saying they were never able to understand these reports. Six were unsure;
  - 29 of the 50 respondents (58%) said the FSEs advice was always or sometimes consistent with CSV's advice with five saying it was rarely or never consistent and 16 were unsure;
  - 21 of the 50 respondents said there were very satisfied with their FSE (42%) whilst only two were very dissatisfied.

### 26. How satisfied were you with the engagement of the fire safety engineer?



**Figure 1: Response to question 26, CSV survey (April 2025)**



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## 16. Analysis and observations

- 16.1** The sample size of those interviewed and responding to CSV's survey was low. With that in mind it would seem that whilst many owners were unhappy with their cladding rectification or assessment experience, they were not necessarily unhappy with their FSE. Owners said the support received from CSV through the rectification process was well managed. Frustration with councils and the BPC acting as MBS seem to have been had by some, particularly in getting decisions made and with the rectification of further non-compliance issues once cladding was rectified.
- 16.2** The case studies reveal that OCs spent significant amounts of money on reports from FSEs. Case Study 1 and 2 are examples of where the advice from the FSE was overly conservative and could have cost the owners significant amounts of money to remove cladding had CSV not become involved. It is concerning that in Case Study 2, the FSE not only refused to apply CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework but told the owners CSV's framework was not acceptable.
- 16.3** Even where the advice of the FSE was found to be overly conservative, owners say their experience with their FSE was very good. OCs rely heavily and often blindly on the advice of FSEs. This is to be expected given the technical nature of the advice. However, it also indicates that owners can be vulnerable to being overserved or might undertake cladding removal unnecessarily based on the advice of their FSE.

### Issue #3: The extent to which the FSE profession acted reasonably and/or consistently in providing their services

- 16.4** This issue is to be considered having regard to:
- (a) applying a risk assessment methodology;
  - (b) determining remediation solutions;
  - (c) relying on scientific research;
  - (d) applying peer review; and
  - (e) providing risk based solutions.
- 16.5** Bearing in mind the Reviewer is not an FSE, consideration of this issue is focused on higher level views about competency and consistency expressed by CSV and in the interviews with stakeholders about the performance of the FSE profession.

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## 17. CSV's views

- 17.1** CSV says that it has seen the conduct of many FSEs and their approaches to providing cladding risk assessment services. CSV observed that each firm had its own terminology for risk assessments and its own subjective view about the level of risk that was acceptable. This led to inconsistent reasoning and outcomes.
- 17.2** CSV believes that many FSEs would prefer to conclude that all cladding be removed because if they said it could remain and there was later a cladding fire, they could be sued which would affect their professional indemnity insurance (which was already very expensive). This excuse could not rationally be used for FSEs engaged by CSV given professional indemnity insurance for their work was covered by CSV.
- 17.3** CSV said that when they were dealing with higher risk buildings the need to remove all cladding was often obvious. But as they came to buildings with a lower cladding risk, the FSEs would become more indecisive and inconsistent in their views.

- 17.4** CSV would engage an FSE or work with the OC's FSE to look at whether partial removal was appropriate. CSV say they had several instances where the FSE said in a preliminary assessment that partial retention was possible. CSV would undertake feasibility assessments based on this advice and if partial retention was cost effective, CSV would ask the FSE to provide a final cladding risk assessment report to confirm the preliminary advice. On many occasions the FSE would change their opinions. Earlier reports would say some cladding could be retained or other mitigation measures used but the final report would say full cladding removal should occur. The reasons given for changing their position were often unclear or that the FSE had become aware of new information which changed their risk assessment. In CSV's view these 'new' things were often things that should have been obvious or were known in the earlier stages of the process.
- 17.5** CSV says that when assessing risk and considering consequence and probability, FSE often provided limited or no basis for their probability assessments. This led to an undue focus on potential consequences.
- 17.6** CSV found that the significant cost of having FSEs prepare multiple reports would be thrown away when they changed their opinions and concluded that all cladding should be removed. Sometimes FSEs would decide that small areas of cladding could be retained but in practice it was cheaper to remove all cladding than to retain small amounts. For a period of time CSV decided it would be more cost effective not to pay for cladding risk assessments and to just remove all combustible cladding.
- 17.7** CSV says the issues it observed with the FSEs it engaged were also observed when OCs/OCMs directly engaged an FSE. CSV alleges some fire safety engineering firms developed a business model which was designed to prolong the process and have the OCs/OCMs pay for multiple reports. CSV describes the model as follows:
- (a) the OC comes to the FSE because of a building notice or an audit by council or the BPC;
  - (b) the fire safety engineering firm explains that the first phase of the analysis required identification of the combustible cladding. A fee would be charged with this and additional lab testing costs may also arise. The initial report may then conclude that the cladding is non-compliant and would need to come off in order to comply with the NCC. The report then says the firm can provide advice on how NCC compliance can otherwise be achieved. This would require more assessments and preparation of another report (in Case Study 8 this initial report cost the OC \$20,000);
  - (c) the second phase report provides a cladding removal proposal. However, it asserts that the proposal is subject to stakeholder consultation, necessitating another report. The OC are then left to speak to their insurers or try to get costings to work out if they should proceed;
  - (d) the third phase report is prepared after stakeholder consultation and says whether the OC can or can't do what the second report says;
  - (e) if it looks cheaper to do the partial removal solution rather than full removal, the FSE will encourage the OC to speak to council and see if they need to go to the BAB or if they will accept a peer review of our report. The OC then pays for a peer review or for the FSE to act for them at the BAB;
  - (f) the BAB process often took eight to 12 months. During that process the BAB would often ask the FSE to clarify or update their reports with more information. Presumably, the OC would have to pay for those updated reports to be done. If the BAB accepted the partial removal solution, the OC could proceed with that work and hopefully still have saved money relative to the differential between full and partial removal and the cost of their FSE's reports. Sometimes the BAB would refuse the proposal, in which case all the cladding might have to be removed.
- 17.8** The SFS Guide promotes the use of an iterative approach to risk assessments much like the approach taken for the development of performance based solutions when undertaking fire safety design. The SFS Guide envisages a draft investigation report, a draft fire engineering brief, a draft fire engineering report, final versions of these documents and peer reviews if required by stakeholders.



- 17.9** Through observing these issues, reviewing hundreds of reports and overseeing the cladding removal project, CSV formed the strong view that it was imperative that a rectification standard be developed. This was essential as the higher risk buildings were being resolved and the remaining buildings were lower risk and would be much more likely to be suitable for full or partial cladding retention. CSV was aware that there were several hundred lower risk buildings that were subject to building notices and many councils had no process to close out these buildings, leaving owners with building notices on their property for several years.
- 17.10** The buildings determined to be medium and low risk using the RAT were reassessed by CSV using the CRPM. Some of these buildings had unacceptable risk and were funded for full or partial cladding removal. Others were confirmed as low risk with no action required or rated as 'elevated' with unfunded interventions recommenced. CSV considered there needed to be a more efficient, repeatable process to assess the elevated risk buildings rather than pay for, or have OCs or councils pay for bespoke assessments by FSEs that involved a prolonged iterative report preparation approach. To enable a more efficient process, MG-15 was issued by the Minister in September 2023 with the PMCR published in February 2024. This is discussed in further detail [below](#).
- 17.11** CSV allege that over time it faced greater resistance from some FSEs to take a risk based and proportionate approach to cladding risk assessments. For example, CSV say there were significant disagreements about the extent to which fire sprinkler systems could offset cladding risk thereby justifying retention of cladding in some buildings. CSV's position was that research from the US on the very low failure rates of sprinklers supported its position. CSV say some FSEs refused to reference or acknowledge the research from the US in their reports.
- 17.12** CSV sought to resolve this debate by commissioning a research report "A 'Risk-Based Approach to Assess the Effectiveness of Sprinklers in Building with Combustible Cladding'" which was published in 'Fire', a Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI) open access journal, in March 2025.

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## 18. Interviews with FSEs

- 18.1** One FSE we spoke to said they were very concerned to ensure that OCs/OCMs were not paying for reports only to find that all cladding had to be removed. They said they tried to determine very early whether partial retention would be possible and, in some cases, did not charge for these initial assessments. That FSE said they were aware that not all firms took this approach, and they had heard of situations where owners had paid lots of money for cladding risk assessments only to find that it would be cheaper to remove all the cladding.
- 18.2** Most FSEs confirmed that the risk assessment process was an iterative process that involved several stages of inspections and reports. In addition to producing reports after each inspection, reports were also frequently changed following feedback from MBSs or at the request of the BAB resulting in very long engagements and multiple versions of reports being prepared.
- 18.3** A number of FSEs said that decisions about full cladding removal were often heavily influenced by the advice from the OC's insurers about the increased cost of premiums if any cladding was to remain. FSEs would recommend insurers be contacted early to avoid developing cladding retention proposals.
- 18.4** Some FSEs said that in the early stages of cladding risk assessments there was inconsistency partly because there was confusion about what governments would accept and how they wanted assessments done. Initially it was about meeting performance requirements which was not possible because many of these buildings were so defective. councils did not know what they wanted and going to the BAB was unpredictable. The BAB's practice note '[Proceedings Concerning Combustible External Wall Materials](#)' was not issued until May 2021 after more than 60 decisions had already been made in matters relating to combustible cladding. FSEs told us that over time, things settled as government expectations became clearer.
- 18.5** On the question of consistency, a number of FSEs we spoke to said it was not unusual for different engineers to reach different outcomes when assessing the same buildings. They said there was nothing wrong with this, provided each FSE applied a consistent methodology.

“ The introduction of the Minister’s Guideline 15 (MG-15) and the Protocols for Mitigating Cladding Risk (PMCR) by CSV represents a specific, government-mandated risk assessment methodology for cladding. FSEs are now explicitly advised to “consider and apply” the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework (CRMF) and PMCR when providing advice on cladding. But it must be noted that, these guidelines were developed over time and when the cladding related issues were first identified and the FSEs are being requested to look into it, given the absence of an agreed method, there would have been a large variance in methods applied and acceptance criteria.”

*Fire Safety Engineering Firm*

- 18.6** There was a consensus amongst FSEs that where partial or full retention of cladding was possible, many FSEs would prefer to err on the side of recommending full removal because they preferred to take a conservative approach. They said concerns about their own liability and professional indemnity insurance influenced their approach. This conflict of interest would probably have led to recommendations to remove cladding unnecessarily.
- 18.7** One fire safety engineering firm spoke about the growing tensions between them and CSV. They said that early on, the goal was to make residents safe and the full removal of cladding was commonly the outcome. Over time, debates with CSV about their reports became more common and the firm was accused of being too conservative. The fire safety engineering firm reported that people at CSV were sometimes aggressive and they felt they were being coerced into changing their reports. The FSE firm says they maintained their integrity and stance based on their professional judgment and opinion. One of the firm’s main concerns was that the people from CSV leading these discussions were not always engineers. The firm said they knew of one other FSE that said they had a similar experience, and they felt that FSEs who relied heavily on CSV for work would be more likely to take a less conservative approach.
- 18.8** Another FSE said that the early response to cladding risk led to too much cladding being removed by CSV. They said CSV’s shift away from cladding removal had come about because the extreme risk buildings had been rectified and there was now more research and knowledge to show that buildings were not as unsafe as was first thought.

“ It’s probably in the last say two to three years, but they’ve [CSV] really started to want to actually look at the risk in these buildings and probably take the next level of justification. And that’s coincided with the creation of MG-15 as well. They realised that if they peel the onion an extra couple of layers, they may find that the building probably isn’t that bad and they could really cut back a lot of their remediation rather than what they did with the early stuff. You know, and they probably did the best could. We had COVID and you couldn’t go and look at the buildings properly. CSV had to allay public fears, because there was obviously a lot of media involved and political pressure. You know we had people talking about wrapping buildings in petrol and things like that, which is absolutely ludicrous to relate something that’s solid inside a metal skin to having liquid petroleum. You know what I mean? It became emotional and it created a lot of pressure to remove cladding.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*



“ The easiest thing in the world for me as a fire safety engineer is to say take it off. I’ll collect my money and I am in a morally superior position because I’ve removed the dangerous cladding for the owners and you know, I can happily go on my way. But this might bring a significant and unnecessary cost to that owner or the government and that’s irresponsible. So, to my mind I need to justify this decision just as much as I need to justify the decision to keep the cladding on. Both decisions have equal weight and require you to do your processes properly. I don’t think it’s about CSV just wanting to retain cladding just to save money, I think it’s about them needing to justify spending taxpayer money if it is not reasonably required.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ Key considerations – such as firefighter pedestrian access, access for fire brigade appliances, and obstructions to areas that are landlocked, too tall for aerial appliance reach, or obstructed beyond the property boundary – have often been overlooked, ignored, or inadequately addressed in performance-based cladding rectification solutions.

Fire engineers with experience across multiple cladding-related projects have developed greater professional maturity in responding to these challenges. In contrast, less established firms continue to demonstrate misapplication or a lack of consideration in this area.

A proportion of projects that adopt the SFAIRP approach are not supported by a formal economic analysis and, in some cases, rely on poorly informed cost estimates that have not been prepared by a qualified quantity surveyor.

In multi-storey residential settings – where rising insurance premiums significantly affect consumers – the impact on insurability and access to affordable insurance is also frequently overlooked in the advice provided.”

*Fire Rescue Victoria*

“ In terms of consistency in application, we would also raise a question as to whether or not all FSEs provide consistency in their approach with respect to impaired occupant mobility (or not). i.e. we don’t believe this happens in general FSE and therefore is unlikely to occur within the cladding space.”

*Fire Safety Engineering Firm*

## 19. Case Studies

- 19.1** We looked at reports for over approximately 48 buildings and identified that in many cases, the process for cladding risk assessments involved multiple versions of reports. For some buildings there were iterative reports that spanned a number of years. For example, in one case eight versions of a risk assessment report were prepared over a period of three and a half years, and in another, four iterations were issued over a three-year period.
- 19.2** We cannot comment why those delays may have occurred or the extent to which FSEs may have been responsible for them. However, it is evidence that supports CSV's concerns about prolonged and inefficient engagement with FSEs.

### CASE STUDY #6

The OC engaged FSE #1 in Dec 2019 to prepare a cladding risk assessment. The report identified the type and extent of cladding only. A second report by FSE#1 in January 2020 was to assess BCA compliance. It concluded that cladding would need to be removed to achieve compliance.

FSE #2 was engaged in 2020. Their cladding risk assessment report recommended partial removal of cladding plus other mitigation measures.

CSV engaged FSE #3 who issued six versions of its cladding risk assessment report between May 2020 and February 2022. In Version 4, FSE #3 said parts of the cladding were moderate risk and recommended mitigation strategies. Version five downgraded the risk to low on the basis that there was an alternative discharge from the building's isolated stair, a fact that ought to have been known and considered by FSE #3 in the previous four versions of its report.

After nine reports from the three FSEs it was concluded that no cladding was required to be removed from this building.

### CASE STUDY #7

This building is a seven-storey building with 83 apartments with sprinkler protection in the basement carpark only. It had ACP cladding on the ground floor canopy and strips of EPS cladding on balconies and on the external walls of the top storey apartments.

The FSE engaged provided several reports over a two-year period which cost the OC close to \$50,000. The FSE recommended removal of all ACP cladding and the EPS on walls of the top storey. The likely cost of this solution was between \$600,000 and \$900,000.

CSV assessed the building applying its Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework and recommended the installation of smoke alarms for affected rooms and common areas and to rectify unprotected penetrations. The cost of CSV's solution was \$3000. The MBS endorsed CSV's remediation work proposal.



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## 20. Peer Reviews

- 20.1** In relation to peer reviews, FSEs said these were an important part of professional engineering practice. Internal peer reviews are common practice. Most FSEs were less clear about when an external peer reviewer should be involved.
- 20.2** The SFS Guide requires an independent review of all reports in recognition that risk assessments will be subjective. Given professional indemnity insurers require FSEs to follow the SFS Guide, this should mean all cladding risk assessment reports are peer reviewed.
- 20.3** Some FSEs said they would always get an external peer review unless it was going to the BAB, because the BAB would perform the peer review in that case. Others said peer reviews were not very common. One FSE said they always put a note on their reports that a peer review was recommended but it was up to the authority with jurisdiction (usually council) to decide if one was required.
- 20.4** Some FSEs raised a concern that the peer review process could lead to OCs 'shopping around'. They said that they would reach a conclusion about how much cladding needed to come off, but the peer reviewer might say that more cladding could be retained. That second opinion was a cheaper solution so the client would want to engage the peer reviewer to take over from there and get them to do a report.

“ Regarding peer reviews, there is a lack of clear understanding or consistent practice. In our view, peer reviews – often involving third-party engineers – tend to complicate the process unnecessarily. Typically, engaging another engineer results in the most conservative outcome being applied, which can escalate costs and prolong timelines without significantly adding to safety or technical robustness.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

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## 21. Professional associations

- 21.1** On the question of inconsistencies between FSE assessments, SFS said this was not unusual or unreasonable. They noted that there was a lot of subjectivity in risk assessments and use of qualitative assessments which led to different FSEs reaching different outcomes.
- 21.2** SFPE said there is always going to be inherent inconsistency and we have to be careful about claiming there is inconsistency as we don't know how inconsistent things are. It said there are many ways of meeting performance requirements and just because an engineer advises X way or Y way does not mean they are necessarily wrong.
- 21.3** SFPE was the only stakeholder that raised the issue about the credibility of CSV's research in relation to fire sprinkler protection. SFPE argued that failure rates of fire sprinkler systems meant cladding retention was too risky and said that that the US research could not be applied to Australia because, anecdotally, sprinkler installation practices were less reliable here. SFPE said the publication of the research on sprinklers supported by CSV had no credibility because it was published in a 'junk' journal. It said that there are only two credible journals for fire safety engineering research and unless CSV's research was published in one of those two journals it had no credibility.

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## 22. Analysis and observations

- 22.1** The FSEs acknowledge that cladding risk assessments are inherently subjective and therefore can lead to inconsistent outcomes. They say that is normal and acceptable fire safety engineering practice. This might be the case but when the government is funding cladding rectification across hundreds of buildings it has to apply those funds in a consistent and fair manner. There was an inherent tension between the building-by-building bespoke assessment approach and the mandate CSV had, to deliver a cladding rectification program in a timely and cost-effective manner.
- 22.2** Allegations from some FSEs that CSV shifted to wanting to retain more cladding because it was running out of funding are unfounded. CSV has a responsibility to reduce cladding risk but it also has a responsibility not to incur unnecessary cost by removing cladding when it is not warranted. CSV's research report, *Victoria's Cladding program: Managing rectification costs to drive performance*, sets out in detail how the delivery of the program changed over time as CSV experience grew and risk based methodologies were developed.
- 22.3** It is difficult for individual FSEs or the Reviewer to dispute the observations made by CSV about inconsistencies and frustrations it says it experienced when FSEs changed their opinions on cladding retention strategies. CSV had to weigh the cost and time involved in seeking these reports against the cost of getting on with full removal. In this way FSEs were seen as putting problems in front of solutions to allow decisions on remediation to be progressed.
- 22.4** Whilst FSEs will say that they always applied risk based methodologies and outcomes, if they could not provide consistent and well-reasoned opinions, this would have been made it difficult for CSV to rely on them.
- 22.5** In relation to the allegations that some firms established business models deigned to prolong their involvement and the number of reports they would produce, a small number of FSEs we spoke said there were aware of some poor practices by one or two firms. We observed from the case studies provided to us by CSV that it was common for multiple reports to be prepared. This reflects the approach adopted by the profession using the SFS Guide. This gives the impression that the profession published a methodology which allowed it to insist on OCs paying for multiple reports to be prepared. An alternate view is that in the absence of a rectification standard, the development of an opinion on cladding risk requires multiple reports and inspections which can be considered and informed by the views of stakeholders along the way. It seems that some FSEs have sought to provide a more streamlined and cost effective service to OCs than others.
- 22.6** In relation to peer reviews, the FSEs generally lacked clarity on when one was required and did not press for them to be done for their reports even though this is required under the SFS Guide which professional indemnity insurers require FSEs to follow. The BAB was considered by most to be an adequate substitute for a peer review, which we agree with. We also note the observation that peer reviews can increase cost to OCs for limited benefit or can create confusion when the reviewing FSE comes to a different conclusion.
- 22.7** The issue of reliance on research seems to centre around whether US data on the reliability of sprinkler protection could be used to conclude that buildings with sprinklers would be safe enough to enable retention of some or all of the cladding. CSV has gone to some lengths to research this issue. It has published its reasoning on this point and supported the preparation of a lengthy research paper which has been published in an international journal. Whilst the SFPE raised objections to CSV's position, its assertion that the CSV supported research was published in a 'junk' journal and therefore lacks credibility is unreasonable. If SFPE wishes to provide reasoned and professional feedback to CSV on this issue on behalf of and with the endorsement of its members, it should do so.



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## Observation 5

CSV's claims about the lack of consistency in approaches taken by fire safety engineers are not refuted by fire safety engineers or the professional associations who say that inconsistency is to be expected.

There was an inherent tension between the building-by-building bespoke assessment approach preferred by fire safety engineers and CSV's mandate to deliver a cladding rectification program in a timely, consistent and cost-effective manner.

The development of the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework allowed CSV to move to a more consistent and repeatable building assessment approach.

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**Issue #4:** The response of FSEs to MG-15 and associated documents and their willingness to apply or advise clients on its use in favour of applying bespoke assessments

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## 23. What is MG-15 and associated documents?

- 23.1** In September 2023, the Minister for Planning issued [Minister's Guideline 15 – Remediation Work Proposals for Mitigating Cladding Risk for Building Containing Combustible External Cladding](#). The stated purposes of MG-15 are to provide guidance to municipal building surveyors and private building surveyors:
- when fulfilling their functions in connection with combustible external cladding; and
  - as to how they should assess Remediation Work Proposals for combustible external cladding prepared by or on behalf of owners or by Cladding Safety Victoria.
- 23.2** MG-15 requires municipal and private building surveyors to have regard to:
- Cladding Safety Victoria's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework;
  - any other information published by Cladding Safety Victoria for the purposes of MG-15 which includes the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework; and
  - Remediation Work Proposals (RWP) prepared by Cladding Safety Victoria or by or on behalf of owners of relevant buildings.
- 23.3** MG-15 applies to class 2 and 3 buildings completed before February 2021 which have combustible external cladding (which is defined in MG-15 as ACP or EPS wall systems).

## 24. Timing and use of MG-15 and associated documents

- 24.1** As noted above, the development of MG-15 and the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework was necessary because bespoke assessments of each building by FSEs were subjective, inconsistent and often lacking in reasoned analysis. The development of a rectification standard had also been recommended by the VCT and attempted by the Department and the BPC before CSV was established.
- 24.2** By the time MG-15 was issued, almost all the higher risk buildings in Victoria had either undergone remediation funded by CSV or were approved for funding and awaiting remediation. It was intended that MG-15 and the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework only be used to assist MBSs to acquit the medium and lower risk buildings that had not been 'signed off'. In some cases, those buildings had been subject to building notices issued by the MBS up to three or four years earlier.

“ What became very clear was that councils wanted another option rather than just going [and] seeing fire engineers. Councils were telling us they were regretting sending people off to see fire engineers for something that they had an instinct was minor. All of a sudden, some full blown report comes back that is saying people need to spend millions of dollars to pull off cladding. The engineers were saying we can't just look at cladding we need to look at the whole building holistically. You also had lawyers briefing the fire engineers gearing up to go to VCAT so they were wanting these overblown compliance assessments so they could go after the builder. What we needed was risk assessments not compliance assessments.”

*Building surveyor*

## 25. Implementation of MG-15 and CSV's Frameworks and Protocols

- 25.1** Since early 2024, CSV have applied the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework to develop remediation works proposals for 175 out of 179 elevated risk buildings with combustible cladding. At the time of writing this report MBSs have endorsed 153 remediation work proposals provided to councils by CSV. For 14 buildings, the remediation work proposals provided by CSV are still being considered by the MBS. A small number of councils have continued to prefer to engage or require owners to engage private fire safety engineering firms to undertake assessments in addition to having CSV's remediation works proposals.
- 25.2** The above statistics show that in 87% of cases councils have endorsed remediation work proposals issued by CSV with work continuing on the remainder. MG-15 and the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework appear to have been very effective at supporting councils to acquit elevated and low risk buildings that had otherwise been unresolved, in some case for many years.
- 25.3** MAV said MG-15 and the assistance offered by CSV has given councils the ability to respond consistently and reduce the level of risk carried by councils significantly. MAV, as the insurer of most councils, was also grateful for MG-15. However, MAV noted that, unfortunately, combustible cladding is sometimes only a minor issue compared to other defects in the building, so the MBS will often have to take further action after the cladding issues have been resolved.
- 25.4** CSV reported that a very small number of MBSs were still paying for or asking owners to pay for a cladding risk assessment from an FSE for some buildings. CSV were working through these with the relevant MBSs and take the view that ultimately it is a decision for that MBS whether they take the advice of CSV or not. Having said this, where an MBS will not accept CSV's remediation works proposal this imposes additional cost on the OC as shown in the following case study. In this case study the cost of the FSE's initial report was not good value and unfortunately, the MBS is now putting that OC to further cost.



## CASE STUDY #8

This building is a three storey 12 apartment building which is not sprinklered. The initial assessment under the Statewide Cladding Audit rated the building as high risk. EPS was on the external walls of the topmost storey and on some decorative mouldings and window edgings on the lower two levels. A building notice was issued in April 2021 requiring the OC to show cause why all combustible cladding should not be removed. The owners engaged a FSE in 2022 who advised that to comply with the NCC all EPS needed to be removed. The report says a further fire risk assessment report can be commissioned to determine whether partial removal would be acceptable and that an application to the BAB would be required. This report cost the OC approximately \$20,000. The cost of full removal was estimated to be over \$700,000. CSV's remediation works proposal was undertaken in early 2024 applying MG-15. It concluded that the cladding could remain and that smoke alarms should be installed in cladding affected bedrooms. CSV's solution would cost about \$10,000. At this time of writing this report, the MBS has not accepted CSV's remediation works proposal and is requiring the owners to engage a FSE for a further report. The building notice remains on the building almost four and a half years since it was first issued.

## Observation 6

Since the introduction of MG-15, municipal building surveyors have endorsed the remediation work plans provided to them by CSV in 87% of cases. This approach has allowed any concerns about combustible cladding risk to finally be resolved for hundreds of apartment buildings.

A small number of municipal building surveyors are still paying for or asking owners to pay for a cladding risk assessment from a fire safety engineer for buildings where remediation works proposals have been provided by CSV. It is open to municipal building surveyors to take this approach. However, this imposes further costs on owners or ratepayers. This is unfortunate given the Minister has issued MG-15 and empowered CSV to assist councils resolve these issues using the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework.

## 26. Use of MG-15 by FSEs

**26.1** MG-15 requires building surveyors in Victoria to have regard to the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework when undertaking their functions in relation to combustible external cladding. However, MG-15 states that when applying the guideline, building surveyors ensure that their own professional judgment is applied and engaged and that they exercise their own discretion.

**26.2** On CSV's website there is a 'Note to Fire Safety Engineers' which states:

*"Where a fire safety engineer is engaged to provide an expert opinion or to report in respect to the preparation of a RWP, or otherwise in respect to combustible cladding on a building, fire safety engineers should, as a matter of good engineering practice, ensure they consider and apply the CRMF and PMCR when preparing and providing their advice. This will ensure the utility of that advice where building surveyors are required to have regard to the CRMF and PMCR in connection to certain buildings affected by combustible cladding under **Minister's Guideline 15**. This is consistent with the approach of Engineers Australia's Society of Fire Safety Practice Guide - Façade/External Wall Fire Safety Design, which provides that any frameworks developed by the States and Territories "should be followed in their entirety and would take precedence".<sup>24</sup>*

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.vic.gov.au/i-am-fire-safety-engineer#combustible-cladding-resources-for-practitioners> (accessed 17 September 2025).

- 26.3** CSV has observed that in reports issued by FSEs since MG-15, FSEs are making little or no attempt to apply the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework. This was confirmed in the sample of cladding risk assessment reports CSV provided as part of this Review.
- 26.4** We were provided with 17 reports issued after September 2023, when MG-15 was issued. These reports were prepared by five engineering firms. Most of the reports were issued in 2024, with two issued in late 2023 and one in 2025.
- 26.5** Twelve of the 17 reports did not include any reference to MG-15. In six cases earlier iterations of the FSE's report were issued before MG-15 was published.
- 26.6** Of the five reports that did include an express reference to MG-15, three were from one firm. The references to MG-15 were superficial. One report simply said *"the SFPE handbook, Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework as outlined in the Minister's Guideline 15 under the Building Act 1993 and BCA was used to determine the criteria and provide guidance on an acceptable level of safety for the relevant ratings (i.e. negligible, minor, moderate, major and catastrophic)."*
- 26.7** Another referred to MG-15 and its purposes then concluded that *"Based on that analysis conducted and discussed in previous sections of this report, it is our opinion that after the proposed works, the building achieves a 'low risk rating' in that it meets the Low risk rating in Table 1 of the CRMF per Figure 20 as we do not expect fire spread across the combustible cladding for more than 2 SOU's. This is because the SOU of origin had no EPS but the other two SOUs above have retained EPS. Therefore, fire spread across the combustible external cladding of 2 SOUs."* It would appear that instead of using the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework to determine appropriate mitigation works, the FSE applied their usual analysis to determine the work required then said, if those works are done, the building will be low risk as determined under the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework.

## 27. CSV's views

- 27.1** CSV believes the reluctance by FSEs to refer to or use MG-15 and the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework reflects either an unwillingness to engage with the material, or an inability to understand it. CSV say the comments made by FSEs during our interviews (set out below) confirm their belief. It says some statements are not correct and reflect that some FSEs have had only a superficial engagement with the material.
- 27.2** CSV say the FSEs don't seem to have understood that a decision about what constitutes an acceptable risk for the community is one for the government to make. MG-15 and the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework are legislative instruments that set out the Victorian government's policy on what is acceptable risk. This material was developed drawing on a significant pool of data from the program, detailed research that the government has invested in and the expertise of a multi-disciplinary team of experts, including international experts.
- 27.3** CSV say FSEs are obliged to properly consider and take this material into account when providing cladding risk assessments, given its legislative authority. If FSEs or their professional associations disagree with the material, they should have by now provided CSV with written feedback setting out their objections and reasoning. In the absence of doing so, CSV say it is unprofessional for FSEs to ignore this material or make only cursory reference to it in their cladding risk assessment reports. It is also unprofessional for them to make vague and non-specific criticisms in public forums or in submissions to this Review.



## 28. Stakeholder feedback on MG-15 and associated documents

- 28.1** It's fair to say the issues associated with MG-15 occupied a significant amount of time in this Review. The views of stakeholders can generally be grouped into the following themes:
- whether a standard should have been developed for cladding rectification;
  - whether there was sufficient consultation with FSEs and their associations during the development of MG-15 and associated documents;
  - whether MG-15 and associated documents set an appropriate level of societal risk; and
  - whether FSEs are or should be expected to apply MG-15 and associated documents instead of their usual cladding risk assessment approaches.

### Whether a standard should have been developed for cladding rectification

- 28.2** Generally, FSEs agreed with the concept of having a prescriptive approach that sets clear guidance on what acceptable risk looked like. One said that it was better to have the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework rather than the cost and time of going to the BAB or getting tied up with councils.
- 28.3** All three professional associations (namely SFS, SFPE and the IFEA) also agreed in principle that having a standard that defined acceptable or tolerable risk was sensible and aligned to how other disciplines of engineering operate.

“DtS can deal with design, but when we are looking at combustible cladding, we are not in a compliance state so someone needs to tell us where level of acceptable risk is. I think that is really important part of getting consistent outcomes. There are lots of biases that influence what you think is tolerable.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

### Whether there was sufficient consultation during the development of MG-15 and associated documents

- 28.4** SFS and SFPE were highly critical of CSV for not seeking input from them when developing the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework. They say they were not consulted at all.
- 28.5** SFPE was very critical of CSV on this issue. SFPE said unless the various research reports produced by CSV were published in one of two specific international journals where they would undergo international peer review, they could have no credibility. SFPE said any peer review that CSV claims to have done could not be a proper peer review and that the only acceptable peer review could be a peer review by SFS or SFPE. SFPE said that the people that had been involved in the development of these materials were a small and select group, some of whom did not have sufficient experience as practising engineers.
- 28.6** FRV also said it was never consulted during the development of the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework. However, CSV has provided us with evidence that it did engage with FRV before MG-15 was issued. This included CSV inviting FRV to participate in the drafting of the CRPM and development of the PMCR on several occasions in 2021 and proposing information sharing arrangements and delivering an in-person briefing on the CRPM and PMCR in 2023.
- 28.7** MAV reported that it had been consulted during the development of MG-15 and associated documents and were supportive of this process.
- 28.8** CSV said it consulted with FRV, MAV, the BPC and the Department on the development of the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework and received support from these bodies. It sought peer review from two international FSEs with strong reputations and used a team of qualified and experienced engineers and building surveyors to develop their approach. CSV said that attempts to engage with the broader group of FSEs on its panel about the need for greater consistency and standardisation were unsuccessful.

## Whether MG-15 and associated documents set an appropriate level of societal risk

- 28.9** Some FSEs said they were concerned that the non-cladding defects or poor ESM maintenance in buildings would leave residual risks once the cladding safety risks were said to be addressed under the PMCR. CSV's position on this is that its remit is to address cladding risks. If buildings require other rectification works or ESM maintenance, it is up to the MBS to ensure these issues are resolved.
- 28.10** Many FSEs said that they were concerned that when CSV used the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework to develop a remediation work proposal, there was no registered FSE involved and that the proposals were never signed off by a specific individual. Some FSEs were very troubled about this issue saying that it was essential for any person issuing a technical report or certificate to put their name and registration details on the document for transparency. CSV's response to this is that the PMCR is a prescriptive standard and therefore does not need to be applied by a registered FSE. Notwithstanding this, CSV said all remediation works proposals were prepared pursuant to MG-15 and the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework which has a legislative basis. It says each remediation work proposal is prepared pursuant to a robust governance process with input from a team of people that always includes a qualified or registered FSE, building surveyor and others who had gained significant skills and experience having worked at CSV since its creation. Consultation with the relevant MBS always occurs and a final sign off on all proposals is made by CSV's Chief Executive.
- 28.11** Some FSEs said they had not engaged with the MG-15 material in any detail so did not have a considered view on whether it was acceptable. Others had issues with MG-15 and associated documents, but they were not able to be specific about what these were. Criticisms were expressed in vague or general terms.
- 28.12** A couple of FSE queried why MG-15 was needed when the NFPA EFFECT tool already provided a risk based assessment tool. CSV advised that regard was had to the NFPA EFFECT tool during the development of the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework. It noted that the NFPA EFFECT tool is stated to only be for buildings over 18 metres in height that have steel framing whereas many of the buildings for which the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework was designed to be used were three or four storey buildings, some with timber frames.

## Whether FSEs are or should be expected to apply MG-15 and associated documents instead of their usual cladding risk assessment approaches.

- 28.13** Some FSEs were confused about whether they were expected to apply MG-15, noting that it was directed at building surveyors. They also said that they thought it was set up for CSV to use it to assist MBSs and it was not meant for them.
- 28.14** Only one FSE spoke about his attempts to use it and said he found it confusing and complex.
- 28.15** A number of FSEs said that they did not want to spend the time adjusting their practices to suit the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework and it would cost their clients more if they had to do so. They said given their work in this area had rapidly declined they saw little point trying to understand it.
- 28.16** Those that had written reports since MG-15 was issued said they were revising earlier reports so did not think it would be expected or sensible to rewrite their whole approach. Others said they would reference it and make sure they were having regard to it but would otherwise just do what they usually do.

“ Our cladding work has dropped off since MG-15 so I haven't really worked through it. I think when I looked at it at the time I had some issues that I disagreed with, but I can't remember exactly what they were and I haven't looked at it in a long time. So, to be honest, it's hard to have a clear comment on that.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*



“ We have had no active cladding work for over 12 months. I have one matter where we had to make some amendments to report that we wrote prior to the PMCR. Rather than rewrite the whole thing we put in a little section to say here’s our process, here’s the PMCR and how they’re similar/different – they’re effectively in alignment in terms of the outcome reached. If the PMCR came out earlier, then we could have made more use of it. If an MBS asked me to do a risk assessment, I’d discuss with them what they wanted. It would be more efficient for us to just use our standard process rather than follow MG-15 but we would reference it. In my opinion, there are some instances where the PMCR doesn’t quite get it right. You can end up with too many apartments potentially involved in fire in certain scenarios. Would a reasonable engineer agree with that?”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ If the fire engineer feels the document isn’t suitable for a particular building/case, I don’t think ethically we can be encouraging fire engineers to ignore their concerns for that specific building and just apply a blanket fit.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ Q: Earlier, you talked about lack of guidance about what’s safe and acceptable in terms of risk. Does MG-15 and related documents provide that guidance?”

A: It helps but it still requires a huge degree of interpretation and professional judgment by engineers. One of the problems with the performance based BCA from the outset is the high levels of professional judgment required by all practitioners, particularly fire safety engineers. I think the cladding problem elevated that level of professional judgment and that’s a problem because if you’ve got independent practitioners exercising high levels of professional judgment then you should expect that conscious and subconscious biases within that individual will start to dominate, including ethics and morals and business pressures and economics. The cladding problem has highlighted those inconsistencies in our national code that aren’t getting fixed. This why peer review is so important.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ Q: So are you comfortable with the risk assessments that now flow from using MG-15 and the PMCR?”

A: Yes. Absolutely. Because they’re going through a rational process now.

Q: Do you have any concerns that this shift towards retaining more cladding is grounded in simply some cost cutting exercise or you’re comfortable that there’s rational reasoning for it?

A: It’s based on reasoning and fire statistics. They’ve done testing on the materials they’ve looked at natural spread. They’ve looked at a whole lot of things, so I think that based it on that, I think they’re based on regulatory benchmarks and what is in the building code.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ Q: Does it surprise you that a number of FSEs are very critical of CSV and despite being given this guidance they are still refusing to use it, or saying it's inadequate for some reason or another.

A: It does to a degree. Depends on what their agenda is. It's a risk based process. If they think there's a lack of data or tech issues, they should take it up with CSV. I'm sure CSV would want to actively fix it. It seems silly to be critical but not be clear about the direction you think should be taken to be fix it.

I do think what I've observed, for some FSEs, unless they've been in the tent involved in something, they will say it's not right.

As engineers we have to detach to a degree from our preconceptions, do the numbers calcs and see if our preconceptions are demonstrated in practice. People do a risk assessment and assume all the cladding is going to be on fire. But that's not the process of the risk assessment. Rather than looking at the fire scenarios. I think there are some FSEs who may not understand how to do a quantitative assessment.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ The Protocols for Mitigating Cladding Risk (PMCR) infers that fire brigade intervention is a consideration, however FRV is not involved in site specific discussions. FRV prefers to be engaged during the development of rectification plans.

FRV is not aware of any direct reference to persons living with a disability and considerations for their safe egress from a building within these two documents.”

*Fire Rescue Victoria*

“ There is a natural tension between CSV's goal of standardisation with MG-15 and the nature of fire safety engineering, which often requires unique solutions for complex buildings. Balancing broad applicability with specific technical accuracy remains a systemic challenge.”

*Fire Safety Engineering Firm*

“ Whilst it is acknowledged that a single, preferred risk methodology is now provided and this would provide more consistent outcomes, it must be questioned why a new and alternative method was produced, when there were similar, existing risk based methods / tools available.

It is recommended to review the approach vs the other approaches (specifically NFPA EFFECT Tool and another other pre-eminent tools) to review the differences in outcomes.”

*Fire Safety Engineering Firm*



“ MG15 certainly helped. I think it came very late in the day. This is the kind of thing you would have wanted at the inception of CSV to make the programme far more efficient. In terms of the supporting documentation that came with MG15 and I appreciate it's still been developed and worked upon and I think it was a very good initiative but it was far too complicated the framework. It was a divided across several series of documents that you have to patch together.

CSV were very helpful in terms of spending time to talk to us about it and explain their point of view. But I felt that CSV didn't understand their own guidance particularly well and they were struggling to give me consistent outcomes in how they would interpret MG15 and their guidance.

As an expert engineer you could spend a lot of time working through it and you could eventually get to an outcome, but if an expert fire engineer was spending that amount of time all those consultancy fees, I'm not sure what the overall advantage was.

I was thinking that MG15 and the associated guidance may help to get to outcomes quicker and more simpler but it does not do that. It was more work, more complicated, lots of greyness, and we weren't comfortable and still are not comfortable in really fully adopting this guidance that came up from CSV.”

*Fire Safety Engineering Firm*

**28.17** In its written submission SFS raised the following concerns with MG-15 and associated documents:

- (a) the development process lacked public consultation and transparency;
- (b) the peer review process reportedly disregarded international reviewers' feedback, undermining trust;
- (c) the reliance on data and methods not directly applicable to Australia's regulatory environment, testing protocols, and construction practices; and
- (d) risks to firefighters, environmental impacts, and evacuation considerations for occupants with disabilities were not considered in its development – omissions that contravene Engineers Australia's Code of Conduct.

**28.18** SFPE said the testing had been done incorrectly, that there was insufficient regard had to egress by disabled occupants and that it was almost never appropriate to trade off cladding retention with improvements to occupant warning systems.

**28.19** Concerns about lack of consultation have been addressed [above](#).

**28.20** In relation to the peer review undertaken by CSV, during our Review CSV has released the peer reviewer's comments and its response to those comments on its website. The Review met with the peer reviewer in question. In summary he said:

- (a) he was approached by CSV in the middle of the process when a number of policy decisions had been made and understood the PMCR had a specific focus on lower risk buildings;
- (b) he was asked to look at the methodology to see if it aligned to international best practice;
- (c) CSV were trying to set a level of acceptable risk to determine whether to remove the cladding or provide other fire mitigation measures. A lot of his comments were about how they determined that the risk was acceptable;
- (d) he concluded the methodology was sound, they used reasonable approaches bearing in mind they were directing this to lower risk buildings;
- (e) it was not the role of CSV to review and re-write the DtS provisions in this process. CSV had a mandate to respond to combustible cladding and it was reasonable for it to benchmark against the DtS.

- 28.21** Another concern raised was that CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework does not adequately account for egress for vulnerable occupants. In the case studies reviewed we found that FSE make limited or no reference to making provision for egress for disabled occupants in their cladding risk assessments. This is likely due to their being no specific provision for this in the relevant deemed to satisfy requirements of the NCC.
- 28.22** The other concerns raised by SFS and SFPE are somewhat vague. When asked why these associations had not taken the time to prepare more detailed and reasoned feedback on the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework, they said it was too late to do so now. They believed CSV was biased or would not listen to their feedback.

## 29. Analysis and observations

- 29.1** It is uncontested that there was a need for a standard to be set by government on what was acceptable or tolerable risk in the context of cladding risk assessments. MG-15 and the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework provide that standard. They reflect a policy position taken by the Victorian Government.
- 29.2** The use of a Minister's Guideline to give the standard legislative status appears to have confused some FSEs as to whether it applied to their work. This is despite clear guidance being issued by CSV to FSEs on its website and despite the fact that the SFS Guide contemplated that governments would issue guides, regulations and Minister's Guidelines and said that where this occurs it 'should be followed in its entirety'.<sup>25</sup>
- 29.3** The fact that MG-15 says that building surveyors may exercise their discretion in determining whether to follow MG-15 has been used as an excuse by some to undermine the status of the material.
- 29.4** We understand CSV is exploring having the materials made into an Australian Standard which could then be called up in the NCC or in state legislation for use more generally. CSV has also shared its material with other countries who have given favourable feedback on it. CSV understands that the UK has considered the CSV materials and there is strong alignment with its PAS9980 Code for undertaking cladding risk assessments on tall buildings.
- 29.5** In relation to the assertions that CSV's remediation works proposals must be signed by a registered fire safety engineer, we have no concerns with the governance arrangements and practices adopted by CSV in preparing remediation works proposals. CSV are a government agency that has a statutory mandate to advise OCs and councils on cladding risk assessments. Members of the multi-disciplinary team CSV uses to prepare remediation works proposals have been involved in the program for several years in all aspects of due diligence, cladding risk assessments and remediation works. They will have developed extensive expertise in cladding risk assessments as part of their role at CSV.
- 29.6** In relation to the assertion that CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework does not adequately account for non-cladding defects or the possible failure to maintain ESMs, we note that CSV's mandate is to consider cladding risks. CSV says it is well aware that buildings have non-cladding defects and that ESMs are sometimes not maintained and that it has had regard to this in developing their materials. It notes that responsibility for requiring rectification of non-cladding defects and compliance with maintenance requirements is a matter for the MBS to administer and enforce under the Building Act. CSV expects that this additional enforcement action will be taken where necessary.
- 29.7** The creation of the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework and issuing of MG-15 has caused significant disruption to the practices and businesses of FSEs. Those whose cladding risk assessment work has dried up seem content to turn their attentions to other work and leave CSV to resolve remaining buildings with MBS. Those that are still active in providing cladding risk assessments don't seem to want to use these materials or argue they are not required to. Some refuse to use or acknowledge them in their work at all. CSV's view that FSEs have been unwilling to engage with and properly understand the MG-15 material is supported by many of the comments made by FSEs.

25 SFS Guide p 3.



- 29.8** What is more concerning is the evidence that some FSEs have been seeking to actively undermine CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework in their engagement with stakeholders.
- 29.9** MG-15 requires building surveyors to have regard to it, not FSEs. However, given the reports of the FSEs will usually be provided to an MBS, it follows that the FSE should be referencing this material and at the very least setting out how any rectification strategy they are proposing compares to what would be proposed using CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework. The profession's own SFS Guide contemplates that FSEs will do so. The FSEs that say they don't have time to engage with the material and apply it to their assessments are ignoring the Victorian Government's policy position on acceptable risk. MG-15 and the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework have a legislative status and whilst MG-15 is not directed at FSEs, it is directly relevant to their cladding risk assessments of buildings in Victoria.
- 29.10** MG-15 also provides that the building surveyor can, and should, exercise their professional judgment when having regard to MG-15. This means that it is perfectly acceptable for an MBS to depart from MG-15 and the remediation work proposal put forward by CSV. They may do this having sought the opinion of an FSE. CSV agrees that this is the case and says that MBSs do not have to accept their advice. There are only a relatively small number of cases where this is happening. The vast majority of MBSs are accepting the advice of CSV based on the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework and acquitting buildings quite willingly.

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## Observation 7

Most fire safety engineers who have undertaken cladding risk assessment work since the issuing of MG-15 and CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework have refused to meaningfully engage with or properly use this material. This is unacceptable. Further, there is evidence that some fire safety engineers have actively sought to undermine CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework in their dealings with stakeholders.

It would have provided more certainty and been preferable if the Victorian Government mandated the use of CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework by all building practitioners through regulatory amendments.

The Business Licensing Authority and Building and Plumbing Commission should issue guidance to fire safety engineers confirming the legal status of MG-15 and CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework and its direct relationship to their work when undertaking cladding risk assessments in Victoria. Such guidance should require fire safety engineers to apply MG-15 and CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework when undertaking cladding risk assessment work in Victoria.

Further the SFS Guide should be withdrawn or updated to refer to MG-15 and CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework and instruct that it be used in Victoria.

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- 29.11** On the issue of consultation, there is no dispute that CSV did not seek a peer review from SFS or SFPE during the development of its Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework. However, some members of the team that developed these documents are members of those associations. The assertion that without seeking peer review from SFS or SFPE or publishing material in specified journals the PMCR and associated documents cannot be credible is unreasonable. As one FSE put it, 'sometimes when people are not in the tent, they will say it is not right'. This seems to be the case here.

- 29.12** We conclude that CSV could have engaged more closely with FSEs and their professional associations during the development of its Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework but can see that by the time this project was underway, CSV's experience of FSEs was that they were not interested or not likely to add value to the process. It felt that its multidisciplinary team of experts involved in the development of the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework had adequate skills and expertise. By not taking the time to do further consultation and bring the FSEs along, CSV have offended and lost the support of some members of the profession. This has created animosity between CSV and some FSEs.
- 29.13** We note that whilst CSV had limited consultation with FSEs, it did consult with government bodies during the preparation of its protocols and framework including MAV, the Department, FRV and the BPC.
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## Observation 8

CSV could have consulted more with fire safety engineers during the development of its Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework. Its failure to do so has contributed to animosity between CSV and some fire safety engineers.

However, it is not professional for fire safety engineers to ignore, refuse to apply or seek to undermine MG-15 and CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework.

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- 29.14** As to the substantive criticisms of MG-15 and associated documents, these have generally been vague and unspecific. This may be because some FSEs accept that CSV has the ability to set this standard, they generally agree with it or they feel there is little point arguing about minor or highly technical issues now that the material has been issued. It may also be because they have not engaged with material adequately and do not understand it or the lack of consultation by CSV led them to believe they would not be heard, as has been suggested by SFS.
- 29.15** On the allegation made by SFS about the international peer reviewer's feedback being ignored, based on our discussion with that peer review as summarised [above](#), this allegation is not supported.
- 29.16** The most vocal critics of MG-15 and associated documents were SFPE and SFS, although neither organisation has written to CSV setting out its concerns despite the fact that the material has been published for well over a year. Whilst the SFS's claims that any feedback they provide will be ignored, as professional associations, they ought to still take the time to clearly articulate any legitimate concerns and submit them to CSV in a respectful and professional way. If they are not willing to do this, they ought to stop seeking to undermine MG-15 and associated documents by expressing vague concerns.
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## Observation 9

Criticisms about the substance of CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework raised during this Review have been vague or unfounded. The full suite of these materials has been publicly available since February 2024 and yet no fire safety engineers or any of the professional associations have provided written or verbal feedback to CSV articulating their concerns.

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## Issue #5: The professionalism of FSEs

In considering this issue regard has been had to the following:

- perceived or actual conflicts of interest;
- engagement with relevant stakeholders; and
- engagement with owners.

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### 30. Conflict of interest

- 30.1** There is evidence that FSEs accepted engagements to undertake cladding risk assessments even though they had been the fire safety design engineers when the building was constructed. FRV said they had observed this in BAB matters (see [below](#)).
- 30.2** We asked SFS whether they had a position on whether the engineer who prepared the fire safety design should accept an engagement to carry out a cladding risk assessment for the same building. SFS referred to the general codes of conduct and conflict of interest policy of Engineers Australia and said they had not issued any specific guidance on this to their members, nor did they have a position.
- 30.3** A representative of SFS said they had a personal view that it was okay to do cladding risk assessments on a building for which you had prepared the fire safety design if the decision to use combustible cladding was made after the fire safety design was finished and the FSE was not involved in that decision. They said it made sense for the FSE to be re-engaged because they understood the fire safety strategy for the building.
- 30.4** Another FSE said he had between five and ten cladding risk assessment projects where he had also been the fire safety design engineer for the building. The FSE said this was acceptable because the clients knew he'd done the original design and they wanted him to come back *"so there were no secrets."*
- 30.5** A further FSE said these types of conflicts could be overcome by getting a peer review or going to the BAB.
- 30.6** Some said they were not aware of FSEs undertaking cladding risk assessments for buildings for which they did the original fire safety engineering design, but if this was happening this was *"not good."* They also said that it was probably quite common for the builder or OC to go back to the original FSE and the FSE would have felt obliged to assist them.
- 30.7** In a recent decision of the BAB,<sup>26</sup> the Board called out the FSE who attended the hearing for the owners, noting he had multiple roles. The BAB said the FSE was employed by the fire engineering firm that was engaged by the builder for the original fire engineering design. In that capacity, the FSE rejected the proposed use of combustible cladding. For the BAB application, the same FSE (now working for another fire engineering firm) prepared a cladding risk assessment report for the builder arguing cladding could remain, contrary to his original report. He then represented the OC in the proceeding although he said he was engaged by the builder. The BAB said it was unclear how this FSE managed, on the one hand, the duties to the builder, when they had told the owners they would pay for any cladding removal and clearly had a financial interest in reducing the amount of cladding to be removed, and, on the other hand, his duties to the owners, whose interests were to maximise the safety of the building. The Board said, *"the above conflict concerns us."*

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<sup>26</sup> In the matter of [140-160 Swan Street, Cremorne \[2025\] VBAB 66 \(9 May 2025\)](#).

“ FRV has observed that fire engineering firms initially engaged to develop performance solutions for a building’s original design are later re-engaged to address cladding issues identified through the statewide cladding audit.

This dual involvement can create a perception of conflict, as the fire engineer may appear to be defending their original design rather than objectively addressing the non-compliance raised in a building notice or building order—whether through an appeal (s138), a modification (s160), or the design compliance process (s160A).

FRV has experienced a small number of unprofessional engagements with some fire engineers, such as inappropriate and unprofessional phone calls and emails.

Implementing assessment approaches, which exploit the vulnerabilities of owners corporations and fail to deliver outcomes in a timely or cost-effective manner, remain a concern.”

*Fire Rescue Victoria*

## 31. Analysis and observations

- 31.1** Some FSEs believe that it is acceptable to undertake cladding risk assessments on buildings where they were the FSE during the design phase. We consider that more often than not, this will be a conflict of interest. The FSE could share liability for non-compliant cladding being installed on the building (as was determined in the Lacrosse decision). Therefore, the FSE would have an actual or perceived interest in advising the client to keep the cladding so as to mitigate the risk of a claim being made against them for compensation associated with the removal of the cladding.
- 31.2** Whether or not the FSE gave advice on the proposed use of combustible cladding at the time of preparing the design is not relevant. Many FSEs tend to hold the blanket view that their role in preparing the fire safety design does not make them accountable for non-compliant cladding being installed on the building, despite the findings in the Lacrosse case. This ongoing denial of accountability underlies the inability of many FSEs to appreciate that they have a conflict of interest and should not be undertaking cladding risk assessments on buildings where they were the original fire safety designer.
- 31.3** The view that any actual or perceived conflict of interest could be overcome by ‘disclosure’ is also inappropriate. Disclosure will only be effective where the OC is given full and frank advice about the nature of the conflict including telling them that if their cladding does require removal, they could make a claim against the FSE for compensation. The only way to avoid the conflict is for FSEs not to accept an engagement to undertake a cladding risk assessment where they were also the fire safety design engineer or where they have already been engaged by the builder to advise on cladding risk.
- 31.4** Some said a conflict could be mitigated if the matter went before the BAB. This might be the case, but determinations have been sought from the Board in only around 10% of cases so it seems likely that there are many situations where FSEs have an actual or perceived conflict and their reports are not being considered by the BAB.
- 31.5** Further, for the reasons noted in the recent BAB decision referenced [above](#), being engaged and paid by the builder to undertake a cladding risk assessment and then presenting that report on behalf of the owners at the BAB is a conflict of interest. The interests of the builder, who in that case is proposing to fund any rectification required will be to minimise those costs, whereas the owner will want to maximise their claim and may have a different view from the builder on what an appropriate safety outcome looks like. Having the BAB determine the matter does not avoid that conflict.



- 31.6** The fact this has been happening and is still happening (as evidenced by the recent BAB decision) is unacceptable. The fact that SFS, as the peak body for FSEs, has not taken a position on this or issued guidance to their members is concerning and brings the credibility of that organisation into question.
- 31.7** The Business Licensing Authority and BPC in their roles under the engineers registration scheme in Victoria should also consider issuing guidance on this issue.
- 31.8** Although there are codes of conduct for engineers issued by Engineers Australia and under Victoria's Professional Engineers Registration Act, these are generic and apply to all disciplines of engineering. Consideration should be given to the need for tailored codes of conduct for different engineering disciplines to ensure that engineers have a fulsome understanding of how the requirements of the code of conduct apply in the context of their area of engineering.
- 31.9** In 2021, the Australian Building Codes Board produced a National Model Code of Conduct for Fire Safety Engineers.<sup>27</sup> Consideration should be given by the Business Licensing Authority, Building and Plumbing Commission and Engineers Australia to publishing a tailored code of conduct for fire safety engineers having regard to the National Model Code.

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## Observation 10

There is clear evidence that the fire safety engineering profession and its professional associations have not understood their obligations regarding conflict of interest when it comes to undertaking cladding risk assessments.

The Business Licensing Authority, Building and Plumbing Commission, Engineers Australia and other relevant professional associations should issue guidance on this issue as a matter of priority. They should also consider adopting the National Model Code of Conduct for Fire Safety Engineers published by the Australian Building Codes Board or a similar code of conduct tailored to the role and conduct of fire safety engineers.

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## 32. Engagement with stakeholders and owners

- 32.1** Some FSEs interviewed spoke of the challenges of engaging with OCs, acknowledging that when carrying out fire safety design work on class 2 buildings, they would not usually be dealing with the building's end users. They spoke of owners being distressed, emotional and needing to have their 'hands held' through the process. Some FSEs said it was much easier when CSV was involved because CSV would generally manage the OC and owners. Others said they preferred to be directly engaged by the OC and when CSV was involved, they were not always sure about what the OCs were being told. Our OC case studies **above** provide examples where OCs/OCMs felt very supported and informed by their FSE.
- 32.2** Some mentioned that sometimes the engagement of the FSE was done by lawyers who were advising owners on compensation claims. In those cases, the client wanted expert evidence to justify full cladding removal and compensation. In other cases, the OC came to them wanting to be told the cladding could be retained because they did not have a builder to pursue for compensation, and therefore the rectification costs would fall to the owner if removal was required. Some FSEs said the expectations of OCs or their lawyers would affect how they approached their assessments.
- 32.3** FRV advised that its experience in cladding risk assessments was limited to being a party to BAB proceedings. It said it was not consulted on projects funded by CSV or more recently where CSV is preparing remediation work proposals using MG-15. It was also rarely asked by council MBSs for its opinion when MBSs were deciding whether to accept remediation proposals.

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<sup>27</sup> See <https://www.abcb.gov.au/initiatives/bcr/bcr-outputs>, Output for Recommendation 8.

“ In one case the peer reviewer was sort of challenging us saying no, you should permit retention here and we put our foot down and said, no, we’re not comfortable with that. And so then the owners corp is faced with a situation and decides to stop using us and go to the peer reviewer. You know, like I can shop around. I am not necessarily unhappy with this up to that point, it was just that, they’ve got an objective which is to remediate the cladding as cheaply as possible.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ Where the project was not available for CSV funding for whatever reason, we stepped through essentially the same process that we were doing with CSV. It’s obviously a little less streamlined because the OC don’t have that Rep from CSV holding their hands, so we do the hand holding and it’s a slower process.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ Engagement with relevant stakeholders has likely been a mixed experience for FSEs. While most FSEs are accustomed to some degree of stakeholder consultation in standard Design & Construct (D&C) style projects, the cladding crisis introduced different stakeholders and roles, which may have led to varied experiences.”

*Fire Safety Engineering Firm*

“ Engagement with OCs has undoubtedly been challenging, and at times emotional. Owners were confronted with major issues that not only devalued their property and created insurance challenges but also resulted in substantial consulting and rectification fees. This situation is vastly different from what most FSEs would regularly encounter in their typical practice, making it unlikely that they were / are specifically trained or experienced in managing such high-stakes and emotionally charged interactions. Clear, transparent, and empathetic communication with OCs is vital, especially given the significant financial implications and the emotional impact of cladding issues on residents.”

*Fire Safety Engineering Firm*

“ Dealing with OCs is challenging – they are often highly committed but require lengthy, complex negotiations that can take years rather than months to complete. Some of the more difficult projects have now extended to five years or more, which is a significant delay.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*



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### 33. Analysis and observations

- 33.1** There was a consensus from FSEs that dealing with OCs/OCMs in the context of an existing non-compliant building would have been new to most FSEs taking on this work. However, the reports we do have from owners indicate they were satisfied with their dealings with FSEs.
- 33.2** Notwithstanding this, we note the broader observations in this report suggest OCs may not have been fully aware that the conduct of FSEs may not always have been appropriate. The decision of some FSEs to accept engagements from OCs where there was an actual or perceived conflict of interest; evidence of some FSEs providing overly conservative advice to OCs; and some FSEs admitting that the expectations of OCs or their lawyers would affect how they approached their assessments, are all things that may not have been in the best interests of OCs.
- 33.3** Although OCs have not come forward with concerns about FSE, this does not reduce the significance of the broader findings in this report.

**Issue #6: The extent to which continuing professional development activities relevant to the provision of FSE services for the rectification of buildings with combustible cladding was made available and the role of professional associations in supporting relevant CPD**

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### 34. CSV's views

- 34.1** CSV says that the FSE profession and its associations did very little to develop CPD and assist the profession to lift their capability to provide cladding risk assessments. It says that the only document produced by FSEs was the SFS Guide, which was of limited assistance in enabling FSEs to make consistent assessments of acceptable levels of risks in buildings with combustible cladding.
- 34.2** In relation to the SFPE, CSV advised it did not recall this body ever being referred to by FSEs or in any way actively involved in any engagement it had with FSEs over the past six years. They say that SFPE's interest in having a say about the Victorian cladding rectification program appears to have emerged only in response to this Review.

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### 35. Interviews with FSEs

- 35.1** There were mixed views from FSEs about the extent to which there was adequate CPD to assist them with cladding risk assessments. Some said it all came too late, others said that whilst there were a plethora of cladding conferences and CPD, not all of it was good quality.
- 35.2** Some FSEs said that it was the role of government to provide the guidance and CPD and that this was not done well.
- 35.3** In relation to the role of professional associations, FSEs noted that these were volunteer organisations and they were not expected to provide all the answers. One FSE said that historically there had not been a strong connection between SFS and government for a number of reasons. Governments had not asked for their help and SFS was a volunteer organisation. He said there should have been more collaboration between CSV, the BPC and the BAB to come up with guidance and solutions and that within those organisations there should have been staff with the technical skills to do this.

“ Q: Do you think that there was enough CPD or other coming together of the profession to sort through some of these issues and help everybody improve competency around providing these kinds of services.

A: I really don't feel like there was a lot of CPD opportunities. The CPD was not necessarily so technically focused, it was more, here's a process. Let's advise you of the process or CSV is doing this and we're gonna offer the insurance to people that are working under us. There was not so much on the latest findings for how these particular products behave. There was a lot of uncertainty, a lot of unknowns. Had there been a clear pathway to get these buildings resolved that was clearly communicated it would have made things easier as well. There were so many unanswered questions, people were figuring it out as they went, and that went into the inconsistency. So no need to answer your question.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ Compliance discussions around safety have to be benchmarked somewhere in our national code, but a significant number of fire engineers are from overseas where they never studied the National Code and we've never had CPD requirements for that. They could be the best engineer in the world, but if you don't know the national code, you'll find it hard to practise.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*

“ Historically, prior to major international incidents like Grenfell (2017) and local events including Lacrosse (2014) and Neo 200 (2019), specific and comprehensive information on combustible cladding risks and remediation was limited. This reflects a period when the full extent of the risk was not widely understood or addressed in formal curricula.

Since the aforementioned events, there has been a plethora of CPD events made available to the industry from a range of industry bodies, lawyers, universities and the like. The quality of these events however does perhaps fluctuate depending on the provider.

However, whilst there is now a fair amount of information available, a significant gap remains: the absence of a specific, centralised location for all relevant information on the topic. Information is currently dispersed across various universities, professional bodies, government agencies (like CSV publishing research), and private providers, making it challenging for practitioners to find a consolidated, authoritative source.”

*Fire Safety Engineering Firm*

“ In our experience, training and education in this area came too late – by the time we engaged, we had already learned what we needed through practical experience. There was little to no formal training or guidance available when we started working on these projects, so we had to figure things out ourselves.

I believe that the primary responsibility for providing clear, consistent guidance should lie with the regulator. It is their role to define what is expected of practitioners and to ensure that standards are understood and applied correctly across the industry.”

*Fire Safety Engineer*



## 36. Engagement with and views of professional associations

- 36.1** Within days of invitations for interviews being issued to fire engineering firms for this Review, SFS and SFPE wrote directly to CSV with short submissions. At that time we were yet to write to either of these organisations to inform them of the Review or invite their participation.
- 36.2** Both written submissions by these associations objected to the Terms of Reference for the Review and said they should be amended but neither stated specifically why or what should be changed. We proceeded to contact both organisations through contact details on their respective websites.
- 36.3** The SFPE's website describes itself as the world's leading professional society for fire protection and fire safety engineering. The SFPE has over 130 global chapters. The Australian Chapter comes under Oceania Chapters which also includes a New Zealand Chapter. There is no website for the Australian Chapter or any details of who to contact. We wrote to the general email addresses on the website but received no reply.
- 36.4** We were later advised that SFPE would meet with us. That meeting took place with the incoming President alone, who advised there were 100 members of the Australian Chapter.
- 36.5** The SFS is a technical committee of Engineers Australia. Our request to meet with the SFS was initially declined by Engineers Australia's General Manager of Victoria. After following up, a meeting with Engineers Australia took place followed by a meeting with representatives from Engineers Australia and SFS.
- 36.6** SFS and SFPE both said that there were lots of CPD offerings available in the market to support the work of FSEs in cladding risk assessments.
- 36.7** SFPE noted that one of the main reasons that their members join is because the SFPE gives them access to a huge amount of CPD from the international SFPE network. When asked what CPD the SFPE Australia delivered to its members in relation to cladding risk assessments, SFPE said that its biannual conference with SFS was the main source of CPD generated by SFPE in Australia. It was not clear the extent to which those conferences or the CPD from the international SFPE network included content on issues relating to cladding risk assessment. SFPE also said it had joint meetings with SFS where they discussed a range of issues such as lithium batteries and cladding.
- 36.8** SFPE said members could also be part of standards committees and that governments could ask SFPE to do foundational research. It was noted that CSV never asked SFPE for help or to undertake any research for it. They said if that had been done it would have given CSV access to international knowledge. When asked whether SFPE had brought together its members working for CSV or OCs in Victoria to discuss the cladding rectification program, SFPE said no.
- 36.9** EA/SFS provided us with 'a list of CPD and technical guidance conducted in relation to combustible cladding'. It showed that in addition to publishing the SFS Guide, over the past nine years, EA/SFS had run five courses/webinars as follows:
- Combustible cladding webinar, April 2016;
  - Combustible cladding webinar, April 2018;
  - Combustible façades AS5113 amendment 1, April 2018;
  - Façade engineering course, 2020; and
  - Protocols for Mitigating Cladding Risk – presentation with CSV, April 2024.
- 36.10** Like SFPE, SFS also pointed out that many of its members would regularly engage in CPD from overseas or run by bodies other than SFS. They said there had been many tall buildings and cladding conferences over the years that FSEs spoke at and attended.
- 36.11** We asked SFS about the written submission it had provided and the extent to which it reflected the views of its membership. They confirmed that the submissions were prepared based on a meeting of the executive committee which comprised mostly members from other jurisdictions, including the National Chair, that did not have any relevant experience of Victoria's cladding rectification program. SFS advised that two or three people at that meeting from Victoria had prepared the submission. This included people who had declined the invitation to be interviewed for the Review.

## 37. The Warren Centre's review of fire safety engineering

**37.1** The sixth report published by The Warren Centre was *Fire Safety Education, Professional Development and Skill Constraints*. This Report addressed resource and skill constraints that must be addressed to achieve effective implementation of The Warren's Centre Reports' recommendations. The *Professional Development Report* refers to a need for greater competence amongst existing practitioners and increased demand in the future for fire safety engineering graduates. It concludes that a framework and resources must be established to make the development of courses and programs more attractive to universities. It also says that micro-credentialing, masters programs and co-operative teaching programs are required. The Report states:<sup>28</sup>

*"While these recommendations are targeted towards variously the universities, the professional organisations and the profession itself, it is important to stress that without broad support from the profession at large they will not achieve their intended aim. Government has always been perceived as the enabler, through regulation, legislation and resources, but it is the profession who needs to inform, encourage, support and, in some cases, drive government decisions to improve public safety outcomes. Implementation of these recommendations without strong industry support will lead Fire Safety Engineering along the same path that it has been on for the past two and a half decades. This would yield further impact of the failings of the profession in the future, negatively affecting private and public productivity and investment as building stock is introduced into the built environment that is not fit for purpose. The financial impact of this on the public and private sectors will be huge. The impact on the profession will be devastating. There is a very real and tangible opportunity to properly professionalise the industry today, and it must be taken. The ultimate implementation of these recommendations must therefore be industry led, to ensure that the resulting courses meet the current and future needs of the industry. This must come with the full support and financial backing of the profession as well as state governments to avoid future crises."*

**37.2** The *Professional Development Report* also refers to the Queensland Government response to the cladding crisis. It notes that the Queensland Government invested in a program of upskilling the existing fire safety engineering workforce. The program, External Fire Spread Risk in Tall Building Design, was a five-day course run by Queensland University. It is described as follows:

*"[The program] was achieved by means of developing a CPD course to give existing fire engineers the skills to confidently and skilfully assess the risk posed by combustible cladding and to provide remediation solutions that minimised the overall financial impact without compromising safety. This course included a rigorous assessment leading to a Certificate of Completion. This approach was based on an investment in training practicing engineers to deal with the issues presented themselves, but it did not compensate for the need for a growing number of Fire Safety Engineers in the future to deal with the many hundreds of buildings affected."*<sup>29</sup>

**37.3** The Queensland Government produced a Guideline for assessing building with combustible cladding in November 2019.<sup>30</sup> This is a 70-page document which covers the framework implemented by Queensland under which OCs had to register their buildings and engage a building industry professional to assess their cladding and provide a statement. If the building was considered to have combustible cladding, an FSE would have to be engaged to undertake a cladding risk assessment. The CPD program was not compulsory for FSEs. The Queensland Government also funded the development of the Cladding Materials Library by the University which was widely used around Australia.<sup>31</sup>

28 The Warren Centre, *Professional Development Report*, p 4 <https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/about/research/improve-the-education-and-professional-competency-of-fire-safety-engineers> (accessed 17 September 2025).

29 Ibid, p 10.

30 'Guideline for assessing buildings with combustible cladding', version 3, November 2019 [https://www.hpw.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/4105/GuidelineAccessCombustibleBuildings.pdf](https://www.hpw.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/4105/GuidelineAccessCombustibleBuildings.pdf) (accessed 17 September 2025).

31 [Cladding Materials Library](#) (accessed 17 September 2025).



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## 38. Analysis and observations

- 38.1** The issue for consideration in this Review is the extent to which the profession and professional associations initiated CPDs to upskill themselves. Many spoke of there being lots of interest in combustible cladding, with events companies running conferences at which governments, FSEs and industry delivered presentations. One FSE said there was a 'plethora' of events, but the quality was variable.
- 38.2** SFS held five events over nine years. SFPE said that aside from its biannual conferences run in partnership with SFS, it did not produce any specific guidance or CPDs or get their members together to discuss cladding issues. Both associations referred to there being lots of CPD content from their international networks available to their members. However, it was also acknowledged that the Victorian cladding rectification program was ahead of the rest of the world and therefore the issues arising in Victoria may not have been addressed in international CPD content.
- 38.3** Although SFS and SFPE were defensive and critical of CSV, it is apparent that the views expressed in their written submissions and at the interviews were the views of a very small number of FSEs. In the meeting with SFS, when pressed to provide more detail on the stated criticisms of CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework, the National Chair, who had signed the submission, was unable to provide further detail. She said she had relied on what the others had said as being correct.
- 38.4** This leads us to conclude that the vast majority of criticism of CSV by these two professional associations were generated from a very small number of FSEs who have not been willing to directly engage with the Review as individuals or to otherwise set out in writing details of their criticisms with reasoning for their views.
- 38.5** The call to action by The Warren Centre in its *Professional Development Report* put the onus squarely on the profession to drive its own development and become more professional. However, it is reasonable for stakeholders to also ask what the Victorian Government and CSV did to provide CPD and improve the competency of FSEs to undertake cladding risk assessment work. As noted above, the Queensland government funded the development of a five-day CPD course for FSEs to assist them to provide reports to OCs. No such course was offered in Victoria but CSV reports that it did provide several seminars to FSEs on the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework. However, the response to the cladding crisis in Queensland was very different to the Victorian Government's response. Queensland's response to the cladding crisis required owners to manage their own cladding risk assessment and rectification process by engaging with the private sector. Under that model, CPD offered to private FSEs was a sensible investment. In Victoria, the VCT established the Statewide Cladding Audit tools and methodology and CSV was established to oversee government funded cladding rectification work. Whilst OCs in Victoria could engage private FSEs, a large proportion of the cladding risk assessment work has been done or commissioned by CSV. In this model, CSV engaged and worked with its panel of FSEs to develop the cladding risk assessment process. As noted above, attempts made by CSV to have one fire engineering firm create templates and process for others to use were rebuffed by other fire safety engineering firms, but ultimately CSV did procure a significant volume of services from fire safety engineering firms.

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### Observation 11

The contribution of Engineers Australia, the Society of Fire Safety and the Society of Fire Protection Engineering to improving the fire safety engineering profession's competency, its management of conflicts of interest and to supporting the objectives of Victorian Government to deliver an efficient and effective cladding remediation program has been underwhelming.

Further, it would appear that very little, if any, attempt was made by these bodies to gather and represent the views of their members more broadly in responding to this Review.

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## Part D –

# Additional Observations

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### 39. Making ongoing use of data and information collected by CSV

- 39.1** It is evident from this Review that CSV has amassed a significant body of data and information about buildings in Victoria which have been subject to the cladding rectification program. It has also invested significant funds into research and development of various protocols and frameworks to support its assessment of cladding risk, its funding decisions and its oversight of cladding rectification projects. At some point, the work of CSV will be completed and the organisation will be wound up.
- 39.2** CSV has embarked on the preparation of a series of research reports to document its learnings and recommendations which will be useful for other jurisdictions undertaking cladding rectification projects in Australia and overseas. In addition to this important work, steps should be taken to preserve and make use of the data CSV has collected.
- 39.3** The observations below are made to ensure that the data and information gathered by CSV and the government investment in the collocation of that data is able to be used for ongoing regulatory activities and educational purposes.

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#### Observation 12

A register of apartment buildings that have been reviewed as part of CSV's cladding remediation program should be established to support ongoing regulatory activities including supervise ongoing compliance with fire safety system maintenance requirements in these buildings. The register should be accessible by agencies such as the Building and Plumbing Commission, local councils and Fire Rescue Victoria.

Fire Rescue Victoria should also have access to this information to inform their emergency response should there be future fire events in any of these buildings.

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## Observation 13

CSV's data base of cladding risk assessment reports and associated building permit and design documents should be made available for academic research projects to study the methodology and approach used by fire safety engineers with the aim to identify opportunities for professional development and improved performance by fire safety engineers.

The commissioning of such research is warranted given the key role fire safety engineers play in public safety outcomes for our built environment and the concerns raised both in The Warren Centre's research and in this Review about the professionalism and competency of the profession.

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## 40. The importance of having a rectification standard to underpin cladding rectification programmes

- 40.1** The inability to develop and put in place a rectification standard earlier complicated Victoria's cladding rectification program. In the absence of an approved standard, local councils and the BPC attempted to enforce compliance with the NCC. The NCC allows for performance-based assessments and does not provide standards for existing buildings. This effectively meant that the rectification standard would be subjectively determined by independent FSEs on a case-by-case basis.
- 40.2** This was not a satisfactory process and is likely to have led to the removal of more cladding than needed in some cases. However, CSV needed to balance the sense of urgency to mitigate the safety risks with the lack of adequate research, knowledge and capability to support the program in the early phases. It is evident that CSV was committed to continuous improvement and knowledge development which resulted in improvements to the delivery of the program over time. This is discussed in detail in CSV's Research Report No. 5, *Victoria's cladding program: managing rectification costs to drive performance*.
- 40.3** Whilst FSEs will have relevant expertise as part of any cladding rectification program, the development of a rectification standard requires input from a range of professionals including façade engineers, building certifiers, architects, specialist risk engineers and materials experts.
- 40.4** Victoria's MG-15 and Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework clearly articulate the State's cladding risk thresholds, thereby confirming the cladding which must be removed and that which can remain with other appropriate interventions. The materials that make up this rectification standard provide an example for other jurisdictions to adopt or modify as appropriate for local risk tolerances.
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## Observation 14

Other jurisdictions in Australia and overseas that are supporting building owners to understand and address the risks of combustible cladding ought to prioritise the issuing of a government approved rectification standard that provides their communities with confidence that all buildings, including those with any residual cladding, will meet an agreed level of acceptable risk.

Such a standard should be developed by government policy makers with appropriate advice from a range of experts ensuring the roles and responsibilities of each party are clearly articulated.

CSV's Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework provides a robust, evidence-based example for others to consider and adopt with modifications as appropriate.

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## Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference



### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### REVIEW OF THE FIRE SAFETY ENGINEERING PROFESSION'S ROLE AND SERVICES IN RESPONSE TO THE INAPPROPRIATE USE OF COMBUSTIBLE CLADDING ON APARTMENT BUILDINGS IN VICTORIA

##### Introduction

Cladding Safety Victoria (CSV) estimates that in Victoria over 1600 apartment buildings of 3 or more storeys have been built with inappropriate or non-compliant combustible cladding. The level of risk associated with this cladding and the question of what building works or cladding removal, if any, is required has been at the centre of CSV's work. In most cases this has involved owners, builders and/or government (including CSV) seeking advice from one or more registered fire safety engineers (FSE). Therefore, the response to the 'cladding crisis' has led to the emergence of a steady and lucrative stream of work for registered FSEs.

CSV is now embarking on a review to examine how the fire safety engineering profession has conducted itself in providing post construction fire safety engineering services as part of the response to the inappropriate use of combustible cladding.

This review will result in one of a number of reports published by CSV on learnings from the publicly funded Victorian Cladding Remediation program.

##### Objectives

The objectives of this review are to identify and examine consistent themes in the conduct of the FSE profession and highlight that behaviour. The outcomes of the review may:

- lead to self-reflection, acknowledgement and improvement by the fire safety engineering profession;
- include making recommendations to government about how the FSE profession should be regulated;
- serve as advice to consumers about issues that may arise when engaging a FSE to advise on cladding risk;
- provide useful lessons and learning for other jurisdictions in Australia and internationally who are involved in combustible cladding removal programs.



### **Reviewer**

CSV has appointed Bronwyn Weir of Weir Legal and Consulting to conduct the review. Ms Weir is well known for her expertise advising Australia governments on building regulation and has conducted many reviews.

### **Scope of review**

The research and analysis will examine the engagement of FSE's in the following 3 contexts:

- where owners of buildings engaged a FSE before or after becoming eligible for funding from CSV;
- where owners of buildings not eligible for funding from CSV engaged a FSE; and
- where CSV directly engaged a FSE to assist it to scope and cost alternative proposals for the remediation of cladding.

The review will examine:

1. The ability of the FSE profession to responsibly support consumers and government to resolve the systemic issues that have arisen from the inappropriate use of combustible cladding.
2. The engagement of FSEs by owners corporations and their levels of satisfaction with the fire safety engineering services provided.
3. The extent to which the FSE profession acted reasonably and/or consistently in:
  - a. applying a risk assessment methodology;
  - b. determining remediation solutions;
  - c. relying on scientific research;
  - d. applying peer review;
  - e. providing risk based solutions.
4. The response of FSEs to MG-15 and associated documents and their willingness to apply or advise clients on its use in favour of applying bespoke assessments.
5. The professionalism of FSEs including in relation to:
  - a. perceived or actual conflicts of interest;
  - b. engagement with relevant stakeholders;
  - c. engagement with owners.
6. The extent to which continuing professional development (CPD) activities relevant to the provision of FSE services for the rectification of buildings with combustible cladding was made available and the role of professional associations in supporting relevant CPD.



**Approach to review**

The reviewer is requested to review relevant documents held by CSV and engage with owners corporations and their representatives; a representative group of FSEs; and other stakeholders.

**Timing**

The reviewer is requested to provide its report to CSV by 30 June 2025 or as otherwise agreed.



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