

Kerri Keogh

From: Local Government NSW <lgnsw@lgnsw.org.au>
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To: Kerri Keogh
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Local Government NSW Media Release

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Building reforms must not be delayed

Thursday 30 April 2020

The NSW Government must urgently progress legislation designed to prevent the construction of poor quality or unsafe buildings such as Opal and Mascot Towers, Local Government NSW (LGNSW) said today.

LGNSW President Linda Scott said that without strong building laws in place the rush to fast-track developments and construction in response to COVID-19's economic impacts created the very real risk that building safety and quality would be compromised.

"We need urgent legislation so that the poor-quality players in the market are not allowed to flourish and these new and fast-tracked developments do not compromise on building safety and quality."

Cr Scott was speaking after the release of a report by the NSW Parliament's Public Accountability Committee, which criticised "systemic issues plaguing the building and construction industry and the lack of regulation and oversight by the NSW Government".

"Now is the time we should be sending a strong signal to the residential construction sector that we want to see quality participants in the construction market.

"Rather than delaying or relaxing regulatory controls, we must ensure this new regime is in place to support the quality players in the market and tighten regulations on the poor performers."

Cr Scott said LGNSW wrote to the Premier on this issue weeks ago and urged her to listen to the peak body's calls.

She backed Inquiry recommendations to urgently progress the *Residential Apartments (Compliance and Enforcement Powers) Bill*, which strengthens the powers of the Building Commissioner, must be introduced and debated, and for Upper House debate to resume on the *Design and Building Practitioners Bill* when Parliament sits in May.

The Public Affairs Committee also criticised the Government's failure to act on flammable building cladding, blamed for the horrific Grenfell building fire in the UK three years ago and an earlier building fire in Melbourne's Docklands.

"What was clear throughout this inquiry is that it is homeowners who are left in the lurch ... it is unacceptable that it is left up to homeowners to manage this with no support from the government," the Committee said.

It also found self-regulation of the private certification industry had failed, and said the Committee would consider the return of certification to local councils in a further inquiry to commence at the end of the year.

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CONTACT PATRICK WHITELEY ON 0448 718 892



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