



14 Nov 2017  
Herald Sun, Melbourne

Author: John Masanauskas • Section: General News • Article type : News Item  
Audience : 316,499 • Page: 12 • Printed Size: 239.00cm<sup>2</sup> • Market: VIC  
Country: Australia • ASR: AUD 13,271 • Words: 368 • Item ID: 873262682

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# Safety in slow lane

## Cladding audit sinks pool checks

A LOCAL council is struggling to conduct swimming pool safety checks because it must inspect more than 100 buildings for potentially flammable external cladding.

The City of Moreland said significant resources had been used to audit 156 buildings in the municipality in the wake of the 2014 Lacrosse fire at Docklands, and this year's Grenfell Tower tragedy in London in which about 80 people died.

A fire also broke out in March on the balcony of a nine-storey Brunswick apartment tower, with the blaze put out by the sprinkler system.

A report to be considered at a Moreland council meeting tomorrow says the initial audit requested by the Victorian Cladding Taskforce equalled about four weeks' work for a single council officer.

"(This) has impacted other building and swimming pool safety programs of the building services branch," it said. "In working to ensure a safe built environment in Moreland, the

### **JOHN MASANAUSKAS**

building services unit has set targets to proactively audit 100 swimming pool safety barriers and audit 44 essential fire safety measures in high-risk buildings each year."

The report says a further, more detailed audit of 123 buildings asked for by the taskforce would have serious impacts if done by existing staff.

"This would have a major impact on the delivery of other building services and the safety of the community, as other safety-related building audits and compliance issues would not be delivered," said the report by Moreland's director of planning and economic development.

The council said the cladding issue related to buildings approved by state-registered private surveyors, so it wanted the Andrews Government to help pay for the audit.

The cladding taskforce, appointed in July and co-chaired by former Liberal premier Ted

Baillieu, has also requested audits from Port Phillip, Greater Dandenong, Whittlesea and Monash councils under a pilot program.

A spokesman for Planning Minister Richard Wynne said Moreland had volunteered to take part in the pilot program.

"We've wasted no time embarking on major audits of Victoria's buildings because the health and safety of Victorians is our No.1 priority," Mr Wynne said.

The taskforce is investigating funding to address any necessary rectification works.

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