

Fears cheap materials used on towers

Aisha Dow

There are growing calls for top-level action to tackle the "widespread" use of cheap imported building products in Victoria, as a probe continues into the installation of flammable cladding linked to a tower fire last year in Docklands.

The aluminium construction material contributed to the spread of the blaze which moved quickly up the 23-storey Lacrosse Building last November.

This week it was revealed that the Chinese-manufactured cladding, known as Alucobest, had been used in two other apartment projects by the same builder.

The product was discovered at Aura on Flinders Apartments in Melbourne and Mitcham Village Apartments, after the Victorian Building Authority used its performance audit powers to compel builder LU Simon to provide the information.

Earlier this month the building regulator sent about 20,000 letters to architects, builders, surveyors and other in-



Aura resident David Jagar

dustry professionals seeking help to track down other properties where Alucobest has been installed.

"If this or other non-compliant products have been used as cladding on buildings required to be of Type A construction then, in the event of a fire, it may present additional risk to the occupants of the building," the letter said.

Type A construction is the most fire-resistant construction.

At a private meeting held by the VBA this week with key industry representatives, there were calls for project managers to be registered as building practitioners, following concerns cheap materials were being "substituted" by builders during construction.

Municipal Building Surveyors have been called in to investigate the latest discovery of Alucobest and in both cases they found that the use of the product (which failed a CSIRO non-combustibility test) "has not compromised their continued safe occupation".

In Mitcham, the Whitehorse council surveyor found that the cladding covered only 5 per cent of the seven-storey facade of the Colombo Street apartment complex and as a result was considered "to be low risk".

A similar conclusion was made by those who inspected the Aura on Flinders Apartments.

But many of those who lived in the building, which includes serviced apartments, said they were unimpressed with the quality of the fittings in their units.

Resident David Jagar said there were cracks in the walls and "dodgy" power points. "It's only just over a year old. Imagine what it will be like in a couple of years," he said.

Bike-friendly apartments

Pedal power Recent developments

- 1 Peel by Milieu**
Bike workshop. Designated bike entrance.
- 2 1 Waterloo Street, Carlton by Milieu**
Wall bike rack in each townhouse. No car parking.
- 3 Jewell by Neometro***
220 bike spaces for 133 apartments.
- 4 Wills Place by Shangyi Property**
About 150 bike spaces (and some motorcycle stands) for 200 apartments. Bike lift at rear to secure basement. No parking.
- 5 George Corner by Neometro****
49 bike spaces for 40 apartments.
- 6 The Commons by Small Giants*****
65 bike spaces for 24 apartments.
- 7 The Guilfoyle by Evolve Development*****
About 150 bike spaces for 353 apartments.
- 8 Jewel Apartments by Evolve Development**
Bike space for each of the 65 apartments.
- 9 Nine Smith Street by Neometro****
57 bike spaces for 42 apartments.
- 10 Tip Top Brunswick East by Little Projects*****
266 secure bike spaces plus 56 for visitor spaces for 411 dwellings. Interlinking cycle lanes between Edward and Weston streets.

* To be approved
** Being built
*** Built
All others approved.



put new spin on living and working in the city

Christina Zhou

Melbourne's growing cycling culture is driving a new wave of bike-friendly apartment developments, some offering repair areas while others are opting for bike storage in place of car spaces.

A new apartment project on the corner of Peel and Wellington streets, Collingwood, will have a bike storage room with lockable spaces for each residence, additional parking for visitors and a cyclist workshop with tools and pumps for maintenance.

The design of the building had been customised around the construction of separated bicycle lanes on Wellington Street, from Gipps Street to Victoria Parade, and will have a direct cyclist entrance from the Copenhagen bike path.

Michael McCormack, of creators Milieu Property, said the lobby and designated bike entrance would also be paved with hard surfaces as bicycles would move frequently through the spaces.

With car parking assigned only to a select number of apartments, he said the development was acknowledging a more European way of living and a growing trend towards cycling.

"The way the city and the surrounding suburbs are planned makes it really bike-friendly," Mr McCormack said.

"You can ride a bike from our site to the city quicker than you can drive to the CBD."

A study by McCrindle Research in 2014 found that Melbourne had more bicycle commuters than any other city in Australia. Almost 25,600 people get to work by bicycle compared with 18,811 in Sydney.

This year's annual Super Tuesday Bike Count data also shows a 7 per cent increase in bike traffic during the morning peak period in the city from 2014.

Bicycle Network's Chris Carpenter attributed the increased bicycle traffic over the past years to investment in bike infrastructure, increased congestion, overcrowded public transport and the rising cost of parking.

Wills Place, near the La Trobe Street bike paths, is another bike-friendly project, where the developer Shangyi Prop-

erty has opted to leave out parking and include more than 150 bike racks as well as motorbike stands.

Project sales manager Patrick Booth said residents in the 200-apartment project, to be launched at the end of May, would be able to take their bicycles and motorcycles down to the secured basement level via a separate lift at the rear.

In Brunswick, the proximity of the popular Upfield bike path to a coming project in the Jewell Station precinct is anticipated to be a drawcard.

Last year, VicTrack had appointed Neometro to redevelop two rundown, low-rise buildings into residential apartments, alongside open space with shops, cafe, community garden and public art.

The upgrade will include rejuvenating a part of the shared bicycle and pedestrian path that Neometro's director James Tutton has described as "the Monash Freeway of bike paths".

"Over the past four years, there has been a massive shift towards cycling as a means of transport in Melbourne," he said.

Further along the Upfield bike path at The Commons in Florence Street, the developers have included 65 bike spaces in a secure garage and a GoGet car is parked outside.

But demand isn't always driven by buyers. Amanda Roper, sales and marketing manager at Evolve Development, has seen an increasing number of tenants seeking bike spaces across all their developments.

In the Guilfoyle apartments in Coventry Street, Southbank, the initial 104 bike spaces included was ramped up to almost 150 to cater for the demand.

"We've got just about every bike rack in that building full," Ms Roper said.

Melbourne's love affair with bikes has also spread to new master-planned communities such as Woodlea in Melbourne's west, where neighbourhoods are connected by a network of shared bicycle and pedestrian paths.



Photo: Romelouman

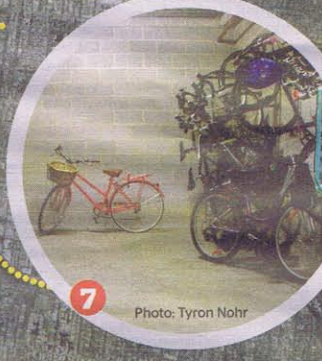


Photo: Tyron Nohr

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- Demonstrated experience in financial and customer reporting analysis

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ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO THE CFA TRAINING COLLEGE AT FISKVILLE

PUBLIC HEARING - MELBOURNE

MONDAY 18 MAY 2015

The Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee is conducting an Inquiry into the CFA training college at Fiskville.

The public hearing will be held in the Federation Room at Parliament House - Spring Street, Melbourne from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm

For further information:
Web: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/enrrdc
Email: enrc@parliament.vic.gov.au
Phone: (03) 8682 2803

The terms of reference for this inquiry are available at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/enrrdc/article/2530

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