

28 June 2017  
Minister for Planning, Mick Gentleman MLA  
GPO Box 1020  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Minister,

**Re: Cladding material used on tall buildings in the Belconnen Town Centre**

The Belconnen Community Council (BCC) is supportive of greater residential density in the Belconnen Town Centre. This increase in residential growth has logically come in the form of taller buildings, now approaching 27 storeys. Many of these buildings feature decorative cladding in an attempt by developers and architects to achieve high EER ratings, differentiate their product, and provide a more pleasing visual effect.

The ACT Government responded to this recent change in building height by constructing a brand new emergency services facility in Aranda in 2016 that can house fire fighting equipment specifically designed to reach these heights.

As the recent fire in Melbourne at the Lacrosse building demonstrates, the use of non-compliant building products can prove hazardous to residents in those buildings. The Grenfell Tower fire in London may also have been exacerbated by the use of non-compliant building materials used for building cladding. An audit of 170 tall residential buildings in Melbourne showed that 51% of those building contained non-compliant cladding. Recent reports from London indicate that of 65 buildings examined, 100% have non-compliant cladding fitted.

With several major tall building development approvals recently approved, the BCC have several questions about the processes in place to address concerns over the use of non-compliant building materials used for cladding:

1. Is there any ACT Government regulation or legislation in place for building products used for exterior cladding in ACT buildings to conform to Australian standards?
2. What checks are in place to ensure compliance by construction firms?
3. Is there any intention to modify ACT building regulations?
4. Could you please advise at what stage of construction are checks conducted to ensure non-compliant materials are not being used?
5. Are there any plans to audit existing ACT buildings to determine the level of compliance?
6. What measures can be put in place by the ACT Government to effect compliance in non-compliant buildings?

The BCC look forward to working with Government in communicating the response to this public safety issue, in a measured and productive way, with residents and body corporates that may be affected in the Belconnen Town Centre.

Regards

Dr. Elizabeth Hirst

Chair, Belconnen Community Council