

**Media Release | INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY AVAILABLE**

**Thursday 07 May 2020**

**Attention New South Wales Media**

**HIGH-RISE INFERNO IN UAE SOUNDS ALARM BELLS FOR BUILDINGS ACROSS NSW**

**PEAK STRATA BODY CALLS FOR PROMPT CLADDING FUND SUPPORT**

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The peak body representing an estimated two million strata dwellers in New South Wales has called for a cladding fund to further protect the millions of residents/owners/businesses who live, own, work or reside in strata titled property.

The comments have come from Strata Community Association (NSW), following an inferno at a high-rise tower in the United Arab Emirates earlier this week.

The blaze at the 48-storey Abbco Tower in Sharjah, caused flaming debris to shower neighbouring parking lots and left metal siding littered on surrounding streets late on Tuesday. The 190-metre tower is among the tallest buildings in Sharjah.

At least seven people suffered minor injuries in the blaze.

The UAE, including skyscraper-studded Dubai, has suffered a spate of fires in recent years. The reason for the blazes, building and safety experts say, is aluminium composite panel cladding.

Strata Community Association (NSW) says ACP cladding remains a real cause for concern, which has created challenges that need to be addressed appropriately.

SCA (NSW) President Chris Duggan says, buildings across NSW identified with flammable cladding (and those who may have gone undetected), continue to be at an increased risk of fire, the longer they take to be rectified.

“While we strongly support the actions of the NSW Government in the manner in which they handled the recent bushfire crisis and steps they’ve taken to restore confidence in the building/construction industry, we hope that they give real consideration to the recommendations that the Public Accountability Committee have tabled.

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“The reality is that buildings remain at an increased risk of devastating fires if they have flammable cladding installed.

“This an unacceptable risk to residents, owners, and businesses who live, own, work or reside in these buildings.

“It took just 90 minutes for fire to race up 20 storeys of the Grenfell Tower in June 2017, tragically killing 72 people.

“A cigarette sparked the blaze that quickly jumped five floors of Melbourne's Neo200 building in 2019. Both buildings and plenty of others like them were covered in aluminium composite cladding.

“A substantial cladding fund is needed to safeguard residents and mitigate the risk of potentially fatal building fires,” Mr Duggan said.

The final report of the Public Accountability Committee, entitled Regulation of building standards, building quality, and building disputes: Final report, was published last week.

The report was tabled with the Clerk of the Parliaments on 30 April 2020 - following an inquiry which was established on 4 July 2019 to inquire into and report on the regulation of building standards, building quality, and building disputes.

The report and its recommendations are now with the government for consideration. Of particular interest to SCA (NSW) is recommendation 12 – which recommends that:

*The NSW Government provide a substantial funding package, proportionate to the Victorian Government's \$600 million package, to fund the rectification of buildings containing aluminium composite panels and building products that may be banned in future. The package should be available to homeowners who have already commenced remediation work.*

The Government is required to respond to the recommendations within six months.

ENDS

## **About Strata Community Association**

Strata Community Association (NSW) is the peak industry body for Strata and Community Title Management in New South Wales. Membership includes strata managers, support staff, committee members and suppliers of products and services to the industry. SCA (NSW) has in excess of 3,000 members who help

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oversee, advise or manage a combined property portfolio with an estimated replacement value of over \$400 Billion. SCA (NSW) proudly fulfils the dual roles of a professional institute and consumer advocate.

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