

PLAN TO BAN THE IMPORTATION OF PE CLADDING

Plan to ban the importation of polyethylene aluminium composite panels

A Shorten Labor Government will ban the importation of polyethylene (PE) cladding panels, reducing the risk that the highly combustible product will be used in a non-compliant manner in future building construction.

This is to protect Australians in their homes and workplaces.

Imposing a ban on PE cladding would implement the first recommendation of the [Interim Report](#) by the Senate inquiry into non-conforming building products. It is the first of a suite of measures that Labor will announce to reduce the non-compliant use of building products.

Why are we doing this?

Fires in high-rise buildings in Melbourne's Docklands in 2014 and more recently in London's Grenfell Tower are stark reminders of the dangers in non-compliant use of aluminium composite panels with a polyethylene core.

The Senate inquiry into non-conforming building products was established in 2015 and heard evidence from dozens of expert witnesses about the widespread use of combustible polyethylene aluminium composite cladding products in the Australian construction industry.

Australia has comprehensive building standards and codes, but the inquiry heard evidence of widespread failure to enforce these codes. As a result, tens of thousands of buildings are likely to be clad in non-compliant PE ACP materials, putting thousands of lives at risk.

The complexity of the National Construction Code and the ability of builders to undertake alternative performance-based solutions in order to circumvent or satisfy building codes further exacerbate the problem.

Many witnesses to the Senate inquiry urged the banning of PE ACP materials, pointing out that fire-resistant alternatives are only slightly more expensive.

This is a key point – there are safe, fire-resistant alternatives to the most dangerous cladding product available on the market. There are no Australian manufacturers of aluminium composite cladding, thus these measures can't be seen as protectionist.

There is no need for this highly flammable product to be imported into Australia.

Ensuring public safety is the most fundamental responsibility of any government. Malcolm Turnbull must intervene and ensure that building safety is maintained.

Labor will not sit back and do nothing while tens of thousands of Australia's buildings remain clad in dangerous material that puts Australian lives at risk.

It is clear that the enforcement of Australia's building codes has failed. Banning the importation, sale and use of PE core aluminium composite panels is the first step in making Australia's buildings safe for occupation.

The cost of doing nothing

Failing to act is not an option.

The Lacrosse fire in Melbourne should have been a wakeup call.

The Grenfell tragedy in London, in which at least 80 people died, shows what could happen here because of our inaction in response to Lacrosse.

Without urgent and effective action the risk to Australian lives will only increase.

We can combat this by targeting where the problem begins – at the Australia border.

What will Labor do?

A Labor Government will ban the importation of PE aluminium composite panels.

Approximately 1.5 to 2.5 million square metres of PE cladding material enters the Australian market for use in building facades annually.

Some retailers have ceased importing lower grade PE cladding but minor suppliers, which largely import low end ACP material from China, remain in operation.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection maintains a list of 52 prohibited or restricted items and a Labor Industry Minister would add polyethylene (PE) core aluminium composite cladding panels to that list by regulation under the *Customs Act*.

The Liberals' alternative

The Liberals have sat on their hands on this issue for three years.

Assistant Industry Minister Craig Laundy has repeatedly downplayed the seriousness of building fire safety since the Grenfell tragedy.

Craig Laundy assured the Australian public that a Grenfell fire could never occur in our country. This clearly suggests that the Malcolm Turnbull and his Government are willing to leave the safety of our buildings and the welfare of Australians to chance.

The Turnbull Government only has one strategy to deal with building fire safety – hope.

All the Turnbull Government has done is blame the states, issue media releases saying “trust us” or call a cladding ban “impractical and impossible”.

The Liberals have completely washed their hands of responsibility for public safety.

Financial Implications

It is expected that imposing a ban on the import of PE cladding would not have a significant impact on the Commonwealth budget.

Labor will continue to consult relevant government bodies, industry and stakeholders to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the ban.