

## **Cladding is a national problem demanding an 'all-of-industry' solution.**

There's been huge media attention recently about the cladding issue and the number of Victorian buildings and consumers likely to be affected by this significant problem.

But there has also been a tendency for the discussion to oversimplify what is a very complex and serious issue, with finger-pointing substituting for careful thought about how to resolve it. [see 'Dodgy builder random checks; cladding crisis reforms' (18 July)].

Master Builders Victoria was founded in 1875 by professional builders who wanted to improve the standards of their industry, making buildings better and safer for the people who used them. That hasn't changed.

We need to remember that in 2019, the construction industry is about much more than just builders, with a complex myriad of professions who all have a role to play in the increasingly challenging sector. Any answer to the cladding issue must involve all of those professions including architects and builders, engineers, regulators, suppliers and surveyors to name only a few of the links in today's construction process.

And it is critical that state and federal governments also play a constructive and collaborative role in this challenge.

The overwhelming majority of builders and other industry professionals take enormous pride in their work and their service to their clients. Since this crisis was identified, many of our members have devoted significant time and expertise to try and help work towards a fair and reasonable outcome.

We are pleased to see that as a result of the Building Ministers' Forum this week, Victoria will now be working with other states, territories and the Commonwealth to raise building standards across the nation.

At the same time, the Victorian state government's \$600 million rectification package will direct significant funding towards the beginning of rectification works. There's no doubt that these are very welcome developments, but we need to be clear that neither is a silver bullet.

The state and federal governments must work together to develop a comprehensive solution for Australia. And Master Builders Victoria will also play its part.

In the meantime, it is important to deal with the facts and try to curtail some of the emotive rhetoric that makes for good headlines rather than sensible discussion.

Yes, there is a major problem and yes, it may not be rectified quickly or inexpensively.

But we believe we need to try and maintain public confidence that the overwhelming majority of the building and construction industry is genuinely committed to implementing standards that protect the interests of those who own, work, live, or conduct their business in Australian buildings.

Sometimes it is worth stating the obvious ... most builders are not 'cowboys'.

**Rebecca Casson**  
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