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London Apartment Tower Fire, Are There Issues For Australia?

The fire at the Grenfell Tower in London has naturally led to speculation about the causal factors and the potential for it to happen in Australia.

Understandably, some have raised questions about the role of building products and the extent to which they contributed to fire and its spread.

It is understood that authorities in London will undertake extensive inquiries into the Grenfell Tower tragedy and it is appropriate to let these run their course. As is the norm, Australian authorities will no doubt monitor these inquiries and make improvements to local laws if appropriate. A 2014 incident at the Lacrosse Tower in Melbourne caused authorities to carry out inspections on building products used in the construction of similar buildings to ensure products were fit for purpose.

Denita Wawn, CEO of Master Builders Australia said, “The relevant laws we have in Australia are comprehensive and under almost continuous review. Recent changes to the ABCC laws, for example, gave the Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner a bigger role in monitoring building products used in construction projects funded by the Commonwealth Government. The issue has been on the agenda for various COAG committees, including the Building Ministers Forum.”

“Master Builders and our members understand the importance of ensuring building products are fit for purpose and installed correctly, but there is always a risk that some products entering Australia don't meet minimum requirements,” Denita Wawn said.

“Everyone in the building supply chain including manufacturers, importers, and wholesalers, retailers, building designers, builders and contractors have a shared responsibility to ensure building products are safe and fit for purpose,” she said.

“While the focus is often on builders, greater attention should be given to those involved in importation and distribution. Making sure these products don't enter the Australian market in the first place is a position that Master Builders has made clear in submissions to Government and other inquiries,” Denita Wawn said.

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