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# Hysteria in wake of tower inferno

ADAM ZUCHETTI

Australian cladding, construction and property firms are feeling the pinch of public “hysteria” in the wake of the tragic Grenfell Tower fire in London that killed dozens of people.

According to Ron Lawson, chief executive of the Insulated Panel Council Australasia (IPCA), hysteria about building panels is masking attempts to investigate and prevent high-rise building fires.

“The national discussion on preventing building fires should not be limited to cladding alone,” he said.

“There are many products and materials that are used in building construction, yet recent media attention has been focused solely on cladding.”

Mr Lawson suggested the criticism and focus on his industry ignores the root cause of building fires, and as such, reduces the opportunities to for the wider industry to develop ways of minimising the risk of such disasters from occurring in future.

“Cladding does not cause fires. London’s Grenfell blaze in June was caused by an electrical fault, while cigarette butts being thrown into a potted plant caused the Torch Tower fire in Dubai in August,” he said.

Meanwhile Master Builders Australia CEO Denita Wawn has called on government to reform the entire construction supply chain to ensure that only regulated and approved building materials are used in all new projects.

“It’s completely understandable that fires at the Grenfell Tower in the UK and the Lacrosse building in Victoria have highlighted the importance of a regulatory system that has the confidence of both the community and the building industry,” she said.

“Master Builders has been calling for a range of reforms that applies to the whole building supply chain. This includes the need for a centrally administered building product certification system with clear, accessible information and improved rigor and enforcement of the current regulations.

“Ensuring that everyone in the construction chain – manufacturers, designers, importers, wholesalers, regulators and builders – has access to clear, consistent and readily available (and reliable) information about building products will assist to reduce the incidence of them being used in a non-compliant way.”