

## Key points

- **EPSA members are reporting significant downturn in business** following the decision of the Victorian Government to claim EPS is a dangerous product and not suitable for use in many classes of domestic and commercial buildings in Victoria.
- **EPSA is putting together a nationwide campaign to sell the benefits of EPS** as a product and dispel myths that it is dangerous.
- **Prevent other states** from following Victoria's lead.
- **We are making strong representations to the Victorian Government**, providing them with evidence that when installed correctly and in accordance with the NCC, EPS is safe for use in classes 1 and 10 buildings and does not present a significant fire risk.<sup>1</sup>
- **Message to builders, architects, assessors and surveyors** is that EPSA members are open for business.

## Current situation

- **EPS products, by way of approved and tested external insulation finishing system (EIFS) can now only be used in classes 1 and 10 dwellings of no more than 2 storeys, throughout Victoria.** For it to be used in classes 2-9 dwellings, approval must be sought on a case by case basis via the Victorian Building Tribunal.
- EPS is also used in the manufacture of 'waffle pods', blocks of polystyrene that are used in the laying of concrete slabs. **There is currently no restriction on their use for this purpose.**
- **Due to misleading and inflammatory statements by the Victorian Government and VBA auditors** that EPS is a 'dangerous' substance and any EPS cladding is 'non-conforming, builders, architects and assessors are reluctant to use EPS at all, and insurers are unwilling to insure buildings with EPS.
- **Consequently, the sector is experiencing a considerable downturn** across the entire supply chain.
- **EPSA have made numerous representations to the Victorian Government seeking to address these issues** and correct the record as to the safety of EPS systems in construction.

## Background

- **Following the 2012 Lacrosse fire and 2017 Grenfell Tower, in 2017 the Victorian State Government established a Cladding Taskforce**, headed by former Premier Ted Baillieu and Prof the Hon John Thwaites. The Taskforce was to investigate types and fire rating properties of building cladding being used across Victoria and its safety.
- In November 2017, the Taskforce provided an interim report to the Victorian Planning Minister Hon Richard Wynne MP, making a number of findings and recommendations, including that expanded polystyrene (EPS) cladding was directly implicated in the Lacrosse and Grenfell fires and presented a significant fire risk. **Both of these statements are false.**
- Following this interim report, the Victorian Government, via the **Victorian Building Authority labelled EPS a 'dangerous product' and placed heavy restrictions on its use in the construction sector.**
- **NSW have also had a detailed inquiry into cladding**, and not made any adverse findings in relation to EPS.
- **No other states have taken the cladding issue as far as Victoria. Yet.**



<sup>1</sup> Expanded Polystyrene in EIFS 'systems' that have been independently tested by an accredited fire engineer and approved for sale and use in accordance with the NCC. EIFS systems do not fall under the 'deemed to satisfy' category of approvals.