

# Rotting balcony crisis looms as ‘next big problem’ for Victorian homes

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Thousands of Victorian balconies are rotting and at risk of collapse.

Thousands of balconies on Victoria’s buildings are quietly rotting, at risk of collapse and causing water damage inside homes, according to industry insiders, who warn the state faces a building crisis.

Building sources told the Herald Sun defective balconies were the biggest concern on buildings constructed in the past 15 years as unseen damage often meant entire homes had to be rebuilt due to water leaking from the balconies.

A paper released by Cladding Safety Victoria in late 2023 said hundreds of buildings inspected for flammable materials had been found to have serious water defects, - especially on balconies, which in some cases posed bigger threats than cladding.

Sam Hogg, of Property and Strata Group Projects, said his company was constantly called in for rectification works.



Building sources told the Herald Sun defective balconies were the biggest concern on buildings constructed in the past 15 years.

“Any suburb in Melbourne you walk around you can go there’s one, there’s another one – they are everywhere,” he said.

“It’s the next big problem and is probably going to be as bad as, if not worse than, combustible cladding.

“One of the big problems is that nobody is doing adequate inspections of waterproofing.

“Some of the builders want to scrimp and save on money so waterproofing membranes are not installed properly, or the membranes are damaged.

“It’s also the owners. People are not doing their own checking and maintenance.

“They think they are buying an apartment which is low maintenance, but that is not correct.”

Alarmingly, the CSV report found at least half of buildings inspected had defective balconies.

Of 1100 buildings, 52 per cent had dangerous structural issues caused by water ingress.

Nineteen per cent lacked or had insufficient waterproofing.



Of 1100 buildings inspected, 52 per cent had dangerous structural issues caused by water ingress. Picture Mark Brake

It also warned 64 per cent of water-affected buildings were constructed more than 10 years ago, meaning they were no longer covered by warranties.

“CSV is concerned that the situation in relation to defective balconies is widespread and has proliferated over at least two decades,” it said.

The buildings most likely to have water issues were one to five-storey homes that were more likely to have “unsophisticated” timber frames and were made by sub-skilled builders, Mr Hogg said.

These made up the majority of new homes built in Melbourne’s inner and middle suburbs in the past two decades.

Typically, damage bills started at \$15,000, rising into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Plumbers’ union secretary Earl Setches said the waterproofing issue was well known.

“Absolutely there is a crisis happening,” he told the Herald Sun. “There’s not enough training being done for waterproofing and we certainly want to see certification happen.

“Absolutely we also need a proper regulatory system in relation to what consumers report when they buy a house, or an apartment, and to expect from parties down the track. It’s a nightmare.”