Lacrosse Docklands fire – VBA to investigate

The Victorian Building Authority (VBA) will be investigating the conduct of the building practitioners involved in the construction of the Lacrosse Apartments in Melbourne’s Docklands precinct after a review of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade’s (MFB) report on the fire incident.

The MFB’s investigation found that the cause of the fire was due to an unextinguished cigarette on a balcony.

The VBA acknowledges and supports the MFB and the City of Melbourne’s confirmation the building, which suffered damage during the fire last year, is safe to occupy with sprinklers, smoke detection and early emergency warning systems in place.

The fire began on the balcony of the eighth floor on 25 November 2014 and quickly spread vertically to the top of the building on the 21st floor. All building residents were successfully evacuated.

The MFB also found that the external cladding used in the construction of the Lacrosse building had not been tested to comply with Australian standards and contributed to the spread of the fire.

The VBA’s Director of Technical and Regulation Jarrod Edwards said the VBA is acting on the outcomes of the investigation into the fire.

“Based on the findings of the MFB’s investigation, the VBA has commenced an investigation into the conduct of the builder and building surveyor in relation to the Lacrosse building.”

Mr Edwards said the VBA is also taking steps to identify any possible use of non-compliant external cladding elsewhere.

“The VBA has begun contacting all relevant building practitioners and will work with them to determine if non-compliant building material has been used incorrectly during the construction of other buildings in Victoria,” Mr Edwards said.

A dedicated phone line - 136 186 - will be available from 4pm today for anyone who is uncertain whether external aluminium cladding material on their building is compliant.

If any other buildings are identified with the incorrect use of non-compliant cladding product, the VBA will work with the local council and relevant building surveyor to resolve the issue.

The MFB has alerted people living in high rise buildings in particular to ensure unnecessary clutter and debris is removed from balconies, ensure smoke alarms are operating properly at all times, know their evacuation plans and to not use balconies as storage areas.

Following on from the MFB recommendations, the VBA will work with Government to advance fire safety with appropriate national bodies.

A summary of the MFB’s report on the fire is available on the MFB’s website at www.mfb.vic.gov.au

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Media enquiries
Communications Manager John Rees – 03 9618 9316 – john.rees@vba.vic.gov.au