

VBA determined to fight fire engineer's attempt to avoid disciplinary action

The Victorian Building Authority is unapologetic for pursuing a disciplinary process against the fire engineer who worked on a Melbourne apartment that caught fire in February 2019.

Fire engineer Bruce Thomas is seeking an injunction from the Supreme Court of Victoria to force the Victorian Building Authority to halt its disciplinary process against him.

Mr Thomas – a registered building practitioner – filed an application with the Court on Friday, claiming the VBA was wrongfully refusing to allow him to surrender his building practitioner registrations.

If granted, the injunction would see the VBA unable to pursue Mr Thomas until the Court determined whether the Authority could refuse a practitioner's application to surrender their registration.

The VBA's chief executive, Sue Eddy, said Mr Thomas' bid to surrender his registrations appeared to be a deliberate attempt to avoid further scrutiny.

"In our role to regulate Victoria's building industry, the VBA's primary concern is public safety," said Ms Eddy.

"We don't believe the community would find it acceptable for the VBA to allow any practitioner to avoid scrutiny and attempt to walk away from their rightful responsibilities by simply handing in their registration."

The VBA opposes Mr Thomas' application, as it would prevent the Authority from continuing its disciplinary process against him.

Under the *Building Act 1993*, the VBA cannot take disciplinary action against a registered building practitioner once their registration has ceased.

The 41-storey Neo200 apartment building in Melbourne's Spencer Street was evacuated in February, after a discarded cigarette sparked a fire that spread up the exterior of the building from a 22nd-floor balcony to the 27th floor.

"The Neo200 building was the site of a serious cladding fire. The VBA investigation into this matter will identify those responsible and hold them to account," said Ms Eddy.

"No one should be allowed to walk away from their responsibilities."

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