



NSW Fire Safety & External Wall Cladding Taskforce

Terms of Reference

July 2019

Introduction

In July 2017, the NSW Government announced a 10-point plan for fire safety reforms to address the risks posed by external combustible cladding. The announcement was made in response to the Grenfell Tower fire in London and a fire at the Lacrosse Building in Melbourne.

The 10-point plan includes:

1. a comprehensive building product safety scheme that would prevent the use of dangerous products on buildings
2. identifying buildings that might have aluminium or other cladding
3. writing to the building/strata managers or owners of those buildings to encourage them to inspect the cladding and installation of cladding, if it exists
4. Fire and Rescue NSW visiting all buildings on the list, as part of a fire safety education program, to gather information to prepare for a potential fire at that building and provide additional information to building owners
5. creating a new fire safety declaration that will require high-rise residential buildings to inform state and local governments as well as Fire and Rescue NSW if their building has cladding on it
6. speeding up reforms to toughen the regulation of building certifiers
7. creating an industry-based accreditation to ensure only skilled and experienced people can carry out fire safety inspections
8. establishing a whole-of-government taskforce to coordinate and roll out the reforms
9. instructing all government departments to audit their buildings and determine if they have aluminium cladding, with an initial focus on social housing
10. following up with local councils on correspondence they received in 2016 from the NSW Government after Melbourne's Lacrosse fire.

The NSW Fire Safety & External Wall Cladding Taskforce (the Taskforce) was established in June 2017 to oversee the implementation of this plan. The Taskforce has met regularly since that time.

Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference formalise the operational framework for the Taskforce. They are effective from 2 May 2019 and will be ongoing until terminated by agreement by the responsible Minister. The Terms of Reference have been updated administratively to reflect machinery of government changes effective 1 July 2019.

These Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified at the discretion of the responsible Minister following consultation with the members.

Purpose

Recognising that the combustible cladding issue is complex and covers matters that span several NSW Government agencies, the Taskforce is the central forum for ensuring that initiatives and communications are consistent and coordinated.

The Taskforce oversees the implementation of the Government's action plan and related actions. It develops new policies and operational proposals related to the action plan and is a coordinating forum for related actions undertaken by member agencies.

The Taskforce relies heavily on a collaborative approach between agencies, drawing on the specialist expertise, knowledge and statutory powers of each agency.

Membership of the Taskforce

The Taskforce comprises representatives from NSW Government agencies, being:

- the Department of Customer Service (DCS) (Chair), including the NSW Data Analytics Centre
- the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), including the Office of Local Government (OLG)
- Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW)
- Treasury
- the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC).

The meetings of the Taskforce may also be attended by non-members, to be determined by way of invitation from the Chair.

Accountability

The Taskforce is accountable to the NSW Government. Each agency is responsible to its agency head and Minister, while recognising that the lead Minister overseeing the 10-point plan and the actions of the Taskforce is the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation.

The Chair and members of the Taskforce are public servants and are bound by NSW Government codes of conduct, laws and procedures.

Protocols and Procedures

Chair and secretariat

The Secretary, DCS (or a nominated representative) chairs the Taskforce. DCS acts as the secretariat to the Taskforce. Other members are nominated by their respective agency heads.

The Chair is responsible for convening meetings and setting the agenda for each meeting in consultation with Taskforce members.

The Secretariat is responsible for distributing the agenda, meeting papers and subsequent meeting minutes to the members.

Meeting papers and information

Taskforce papers may be prepared by DCS, member agencies or jointly depending on the subject matter expertise needed.

Papers for a Taskforce meeting should be approved through normal agency processes relevant to the author agency and submitted to the Taskforce Secretariat ahead of the meeting.

Meeting papers are confidential. Out-of-session papers can be submitted as determined by the Taskforce Chair.

Release of any information shared with the Taskforce that is not already in the public domain should be discussed and, if appropriate, agreed with the Taskforce Chair in the first instance.

The Secretariat will draft and distribute meeting minutes within seven days of the relevant meeting for confirmation by members. Any comments received will be considered in the finalisation of the minutes. The minutes for the previous meeting are to be confirmed at the subsequent meeting with or without amendment.

Publications

Published updates on the work of the Taskforce are to be issued by DCS on its website with input from member agencies. Member agencies can also publish combustible cladding-related information and information about the Taskforce, but should use best endeavours to coordinate this with other Taskforce members and/or the Chair. The DCS website is the main source of Government information on the Taskforce. Any correspondence on behalf of the Taskforce will be issued by the Chair / DCS.

Database

The central database of buildings that may have combustible cladding is maintained by DCS, with input from FRNSW and DPIE.

Decisions

Decisions of the Taskforce are to be made by consensus.

While each agency is not bound by the decisions of the Taskforce, noting that they are responsible to their own Ministers, member agencies are to use best endeavours to coordinate efforts and reach a consensus on matters related to combustible cladding and the 10-point plan.

Meeting Frequency

The Taskforce will meet regularly at intervals determined by the Chair in consultation with member agencies.

Quorum

A quorum is achieved at meetings of the Taskforce if it is attended by the Chair and at least one representative from FRNSW, and at least one representative from DPIE.