

Opening Statement

Committee Chair and senators, I would like to thank you for inviting us to appear.

It is imperative to stress that Aluminium Composite Material or ACM cladding is not, of itself, dangerous, but it is important that the right type is used for the required purpose.

The vilification of panels via 'cheap cladding or combustible cladding' – where many non-combustible, zero-flaming varieties are available by ethical manufacturers – only adds to the misinformation around safe ACM use.

That's why in 2015, Fairview sought to take a leadership role - to better inform everyone about ACM panels in the aftermath of the Lacrosse Tower fire.

Our company has operated for over 25 years.

Our ACM panels are manufactured to ISO-9001 quality standards and are CodeMark certified. They were not fitted on the Lacrosse Tower in 2014, nor on the Grenfell Tower in London.

We manufacture two ACM panels. Vitracore G2 has a non-combustible aluminium core; Vitrabond FR has a fire resistant mineral composite core.

Fairview provides product specifications, installation guides and test data to help ensure all its ACM panels are used for the purpose for which they were designed and certified.

Existing laws and regulations are implemented and adhered to. Let's better enforce Australia that are already among the most stringent in the world.

Following the Lacrosse fire the Building Ministers Forum agreed to a range of measures to address risks associated with cladding on high rise. These included a National Advisory Note on how the NCC should be interpreted to assist in product selection, installation & certification and the development of full-scale fire testing and classification of external walls - AS5113 - which was recently completed by Standards Australia.

Two years ago, Fairview ceased manufacturing PE ACM panels.

Remaining PE core stocks may still be sold if requested and where fit for purpose under the building codes.

In 2015, Fairview wrote to and met a number of key Federal and Victorian State MPs and Senators or their advisers, including some Senators here today or their advisers.

We provided a submission to this inquiry in 2015 and produced a short video, which explains it is the core material used in the panels that primarily determines fire resistance.

The video made three key points:

- all panels must be correctly specified,
- professionally installed

- And officially certified to perform to code and to regulations.

It's not merely about the panels; the system of check, check and check again must work!

The video was emailed to over 500 stakeholders.

It was Fairview's position at the time that consumers, regulators, developers, building owners and occupiers and government needed to be better informed about ACM panels so that community concerns were allayed.

Fairview in conjunction with leading fire engineers ran a series of educational public and in-house seminars in each capital city about the compliant use of ACM cladding.

We thought that focus should shift to the material in the core of the cladding and whether people tasked with determining if the cladding was fit for a purpose had fulfilled their obligations.

The recent Grenfell Tower fire has again brought this issue into sharp focus.

We welcome efforts by governments to establish taskforces and identify buildings fitted with non-conforming panels.

Professionals who select, install and sign off on buildings must ensure that any ACM panel used fully complies with relevant building codes.

At that task, Fairview has striking new red, amber or green labels, to affix to our panels. All panels have always been identified with ink jetted identification.

We believe our new labels - developed in partnership with international-standards certifier CertMark - will make it easier for builders, owners and other stakeholders to differentiate between panel types and where they can be used.

We are happy to answer Senators' questions.