



BMF Report - 8 February 2018

National President, David Burnell FAIB

The AIB was invited to attend and present to the Building Ministers Forum (BMF) in Hobart along with a 21 other industry and employer groups as a follow up to the last meeting held in August 2018.

We were asked to report on ... *What is industry doing to support cultural change?*

While the direct response from AIB touched on the active work we are involved in, our representation for the benefit of the construction industry was around our participation and contribution to the work of both the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) and Standards Australia (SA).

We also highlighted the series of information and CPD training events we have hosted that directly supporting the Shergold – Weir report:

- Bronwyn Weir presenting about her report in detail;
- A Legal Masterclass presentation;
- A Flammable Aluminium Composite Cladding information seminar;
- The Top 10 legal issues for 2018 which focused on cladding and non-compliant building products co-hosted with Minter Ellison;
- Building Regulatory Reform in Australia presented by Wayne Liddy a senior AIBS practitioner;
- Cladding presentations and fire safety and engineering discussions around the code and identifying compliant cladding products presented by Jonathan Barnett;
- We are currently attempting to arrange a series of presentations for each State by the Hon. John Fahey to talk about the ABCB's response to Shergold - Weir.

The industry presentations from all other groups then consistently echoed the same themes expressed within the AIB closing remarks.

However, the meeting must respond to the Shergold – Weir findings. The report clearly identifies that our current regulatory system is not robust; and the headline grabbing failures of recent times, can only be improved if all the parties represented, take responsibility and action.

This industry should be able to rely on a national framework for construction led by this group of Ministers that includes:

- State and Federal ministers who work cooperatively as the lead regulators;
- Universal adoption and use of NCC volumes 1-3 across all jurisdictions;
- National Licencing for all building practitioners;
- Adopting an industry wide approach to continuing professional development as a requirement for all licence holders;

However the most productive exchanges actually occurred following the completion of the industry presentations when two ministers elected to announce the respective positions for their State jurisdiction on the future use of aluminium composite (PE core) cladding.

The proposals were exact opposite solutions and questions from the industry highlighted these anomalies:

- An immediate blanket ban from sale of the material would financially impact the current supply chain, the partially constructed buildings and all ancillary uses like signage, ATM fascia surrounds etc. as a direct consequence;
- A ban on all imported product may still find locally manufactured product in use that contains a PE core;
- Removing the product from all future new construction did not address the need to resolve a solution to make existing buildings safer for the public;
- The product has been documented as unsuitable within existing codes for over 10 years so the new ban does nothing to educate the industry that has continued to install the product against National Code advice and legislated regulatory enforcement has not occurred in the States during this time.

The industry commentary on ministerial views probably demonstrated a larger role for round table discussion would benefit the ministers in understanding the ramifications beyond simple statements about banning materials. The room experts also identified Australian Construction systems had many additional safety features like early occupant warnings, fire safety egress paths and automatic sprinkler protection / suppression that were clearly demonstrated last Monday in Melbourne.