MEDIA RELEASE
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Ban urged on companies importing unsafe products

The Construction, Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) has called for import restrictions to be slapped on companies found to have manufactured building products that do not comply with Australian Standards.

A media report in today’s Australian newspaper details legal action over a fire at an apartment building in Docklands, Melbourne. It is claimed the fire was the caused by unsafe imported building products.

The union said it was time the Federal Government took a hard line.

“These companies are putting the lives and safety of Australians at risk by importing building products that do not comply with Australian Standards,” CFMEU National Secretary, Michael O’Connor said.

“And the removal of tariffs under an Australia-China FTA would pave the way for more unsafe building products to flood into the country.

“The Federal Government needs to properly resource Customs and the ACCC so they can crack down on unsafe imports.

“It’s not good enough to point to the regulations when they are not being enforced. It’s time to take a strong stand to protect Australian lives.”

The union has campaigned for tougher action from the Federal Government to ensure that imported building products comply with Australian Standards, consistent with their election commitments.

Around the country, the use of sub-standard building materials has resulted in expensive and potentially dangerous safety and quality compromises, including:

- Sub-standard cable imported from China, the potential cause of electrical shock and fire, installed in 40,000 Australian houses and since recalled homes.
- 200 panes of glass have fallen from the Waterfront Place building in Brisbane
- The ASIO Government building in Canberra lost some 21 panels
- Windows had to be replaced in a 24-storey development in Perth with conforming products.
- Melbourne’s ‘Melburnian’ apartment block faced a repair bill of $9 million after nine panels of glass failed.
- Grocon had to replace half the glass in its building at 150 Collins Street Melbourne, at an estimated cost of $18 million.
- The prevalence of sub standard plywood and engineered wood products which risk lives and the health and safety of both construction workers and consumers.

A 2013 report by the Australian Industry Group found:
- 92% of building and construction manufacturing businesses had substandard products in their supply chains
- nearly half (45%) had suffered financially because of such products.
As part of the union's *Our jobs, our kids, our future* campaign, stop work meetings have resulted in thousands signing a union petition for the Parliament calling for government action and the creation of a new agency to monitor, test and enforce against sub standard products.


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