

NATIONAL VICTORIA CONSTRUCTION

Glass panel explodes on balcony of luxury inner-Melbourne apartment building

By [Anthony Colangelo](#)

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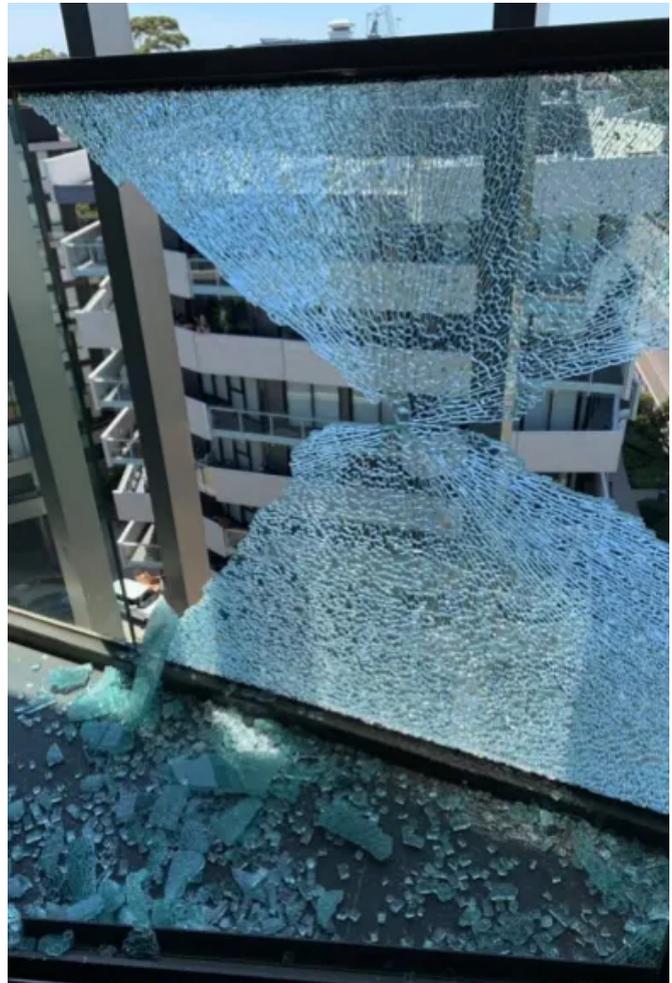


A glass balustrade on the 10th floor of a luxury apartment building in Melbourne's inner-east spontaneously shattered on Christmas Day.

It is the second reported "exploding glass" incident at the Eden building in the Acacia Place complex on Victoria Street, Abbotsford, since it opened in 2013.

A resident heard a loud bang from his balcony while he was in his bedroom on Christmas Day, and upon inspection found the glass panels on the balcony had shattered.

Glass from the explosion fell onto the balcony of the apartment below, with the resident there claiming debris ricocheted so hard it left glass embedded in the railing and had chipped ceramic pots.



Building management had not covered hole in the balustrade more than a week after the incident.

They returned from a holiday to find glass all over their balcony. Glass was still falling onto their balcony on Wednesday because building management had not completely removed the remaining debris, nor had it covered up the gaping hole.

The balustrade that exploded looks over a driveway, public footpath and pedestrian crossing.

It is suspected glass balustrades shatter when there is excessive nickel sulphide present in the glass and it is exposed to heat, wind or other stresses. Too much nickel sulphide is often found in glass purchased cheaply from overseas, which has not gone through the processes required to meet Australian standards.

On Wednesday, owners corporation management company Bluestone OCM said they "have no evidence that suggests the presence of excessive amounts of nickel sulphide" in Eden's glass balustrades.

"The resident has been advised not to use the balcony until it is covered," a Bluestone spokesman said. "The owners corporation is awaiting a proposal from a facade expert to investigate the incident."

A balcony in the same building exploded in 2016, but Bluestone did not respond questions about that incident on Wednesday. The builder of the complex L.U. Simon said it would investigate the incident next week.

In July 2017 *The Age* published video footage of [glass balcony explosions at a Carlton apartment building](#).

Building standards in Australia have come under increased scrutiny since Sydney's recently completed [Opal Tower was evacuated after residents heard loud "cracking noises", sparking fears of a collapse](#).

Sahil Bhasin is the national general manager of Roscon, a company specialising in identifying building defects.

"There's a lot of other latent defects that are related to the quality of construction based on the developer setting the price for the builder to achieve," Mr Bhasin said.



"There's a wider problem in Australia which is that developers are forcing the price point to the builder and that is only achievable through substituting products which offer less quality and safety.

"These products relate to floor covering all the way through to kitchens."

Apartment owners often struggle to get compensation for building defects and experts believe [Victoria will be facing a crisis of dangerous and faulty buildings](#) in the near future due to widespread poor construction standards in newer buildings.

Strata Community Australia's Victorian general manager Rob Beck said that when it comes to building defects, apartment owners are very limited in what they can claim for. He said VCAT was an option, but that was a lengthy, protracted process.

"In the main, those that live in or own apartments are treated as second class citizens by the regulatory system that is meant to protect them," Mr Beck said.

"It isn't compulsory for builders to have warranty insurance for anything above three stories, and even for buildings under three stories it is a system of last resort."

A review of Victoria's strata laws will be completed by mid 2019.

Strata Community Australia would like to see a "defects bond" implemented as a result of that review, among other changes to protect apartment owners.

L.U. Simon also built Melbourne's Lacrosse building on La Trobe Street. In 2015, fire raced up 13 storeys of the Lacrosse building in under 10 minutes in part due to the cladding installed on the tower. No one was killed. The company agreed to replace the cladding for \$5.6 million, four years after the fire.

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Glass fell onto the balcony of the apartment below.



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