



Media release

Greens candidate calls for NSW Royal Commission following Opal Tower fiasco

Following the Opal Tower investigation with residents excluded from their apartments, Charles Jago, Greens state election candidate and Canada Bay Deputy Mayor, has called for a Royal Commission into the NSW building industry. Such an Inquiry would enable a widespread investigation of building practices, and consider how to provide greater protections for high-rise owners with properties impacted by building faults.

Councillor Jago said that serious building defects occur in the majority of high rise towers. “In a 2012 study with federal government funding, 85% of apartment owners were aware of defects in their own strata title complex built since 2000,” he said.

“Owners Corporations of high-rise apartments have no means of rectifying building defects in high rise towers except by suing property developers. Realistically no Owners Corporation can afford this huge expense, caused by the NSW Government in 2014 when they removed home warranty insurance for buildings over three storeys in height.

Councillor Jago described the problems emerging from the Opal Tower investigation as “the canary in the coal mine”. “With reports of substantial building defects in the Opal Tower, home owners in high rise towers will be wondering how they could repair such defects in their own buildings. Even now, three months after the initial disclosure of building defects, three quarters of Opal Tower residents are unable to move back into their homes,” said Councillor Jago.

Councillor Jago attributed much of the blame to the private certification system, which failed to identify construction problems in Opal Tower. “The system in which builders can choose and pay their own private certifier creates a fundamental conflict of interest leading to lower standards in construction. When so many of our residents now live in high properties, we need to ensure that their buildings conform to the highest safety standards,” said Councillor Jago.

“Only a Royal Commission into planning in NSW can fully investigate past malpractices and failures, and make recommendations insisting on higher industry standards,” said Councillor Jago.

“If elected, the Greens will abolish the private certification system and return to a system of publicly paid and publicly accountable building certifiers, employed by local councils with oversight by a state-wide professional body. We will reintroduce home warranty insurance with stricter requirements for high rise developments, introduce a statutory duty of care for property developers and builders and introduce a longer period, such as 10 years, for latent defects in buildings, similar to the UK.”

Councillor Jago said that the scale of the problem was increasing rapidly. “The NSW government is planning for a massive increase in the number of high-rise towers. In Rhodes alone, the government plans an additional 13,000 people, in medium density and high rise. Action is required now to bring this problem under control before it gets any worse.”

Charles Jago
Deputy Mayor of Canada Bay Council
Greens candidate for the NSW seat of Drummoyne and the Federal seat of Reid

For more information, contact info@canadabaygreens.org or call Charles Jago on 0403 902 613.

Also see <http://canadabaygreens.org>

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Links

<https://greens.org.au/nsw/communities#disclosure>

<https://theconversation.com/the-big-lesson-from-opal-tower-is-that-badly-built-apartments-arent-only-an-issue-for-residents-109722>

<https://www.aboveboardbuildinginspections.com/blog/10-most-common-problems-with-new-build-apartments/>