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Shonky block shock

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Defects in a third of apartments

LACHLAN LEEMING

STRESSED unit owners are reportedly being driven to the brink of suicide by home repair bills reaching up to \$50,000, with more than a third of apartments built in NSW in the past six years being listed as having “a serious defect of some kind”.

The revelations from NSW building watchdog David Chandler came as he warned the high number of defective homes could impact buyer trust and derail industry targets of building the 30,000 new apartments desperately needed each year.

Mr Chandler, whose Building Commissioner role was established in 2019 to crack down on cowboy developers building dodgy new apartments, said a survey of 500 buildings completed in the past six years showed 36 per cent had a defect of some kind, ranging from structural faults to defective waterproofing, cladding and fire safety systems.

These faults were costing individual owners between \$40,000 to \$50,000 to fix, Mr Chandler said at a presentation hosted by industry body the Urban Development Institute of Australia.

Karen Stiles, executive officer of the Owners Corporation Network, said the number of dodgy new build apartments in Sydney had eroded the confidence of buyers, while those who have already

bought have been driven to “suicide” by spirall-

ing costs to fix their homes.

“Those who have bought into them will never buy a new build again and they make sure they tell everyone they run into not to risk it,” she said. “I’m hearing from remedial industry contacts examples like one building will require \$500,000 per apartment to fix – the apartments are only valued at \$850,000.

“There’ll be bankruptcies, there’ll be suicides, there’ll be marriage breakdowns.”

A blitz by the building commissioner over June and July resulted in eight urgent work rectification orders being issued for Sydney developments and five orders barring residents moving in.

The concerns have also accelerated work on a new rating system for developers and builders brought in by the watchdog, which will give firms a one to five star rating based on the standard of their work.