**Slater & Gordon calls for taskforce to act on faulty house slabs**

Property Business

Date April 2, 2014

* (1)
* Read later

[](http://www.theage.com.au/business/by/Simon-Johanson)

[**Simon Johanson**](http://www.theage.com.au/business/by/Simon-Johanson)

*Property Editor for The Age*

[View more articles from Simon Johanson](http://www.theage.com.au/business/by/Simon-Johanson)

[Follow Simon on Twitter](http://twitter.com/sijoh) [Email Simon](mailto:sjohanson@theage.com.au)

* [submit to reddit](http://www.reddit.com/submit?url=http://www.theage.com.au/business/slater--gordon-calls-for-taskforce-to-act-on-faulty-house-slabs-20140401-35wbz.html&title=Slater%20&%20Gordon%20calls%20for%20taskforce%20to%20act%20on%20faulty%20house%20slabs)
* [Email article](http://www.theage.com.au/action/emailToFriend?id=5314031)
* [Print](http://www.theage.com.au/action/printArticle?id=5314031)
* [Reprints & permissions](http://rightsportal.copyright.com.au/pages/republicationpage.aspx?publisher=fxj&publication=TAG&author=Simon%20Johanson&title=Slater%20&%20Gordon%20calls%20for%20taskforce%20to%20act%20on%20faulty%20house%20slabs&publicationdate=02/04/2014&url=http://www.theage.com.au/business/slater--gordon-calls-for-taskforce-to-act-on-faulty-house-slabs-20140401-35wbz.html)

Australia's home builders face a "litigation Armageddon" from disgruntled home owners after after a tribunal awarded nearly $300,000 to a property investor in compensation for the cost of replacing his damaged home in Hollows Circuit, Tarneit, on Melbourne's outskirts.

Slater & Gordon solicitor Ben Hardwick told Ali Moore on ABC local radio, the firm had more than 160 people with similar claims whose cases it would take "all the way."

Advertisement

"We speak to people every day who are living a nightmare in the sense that they’ve brought a house and land package, often their first home, and it’s their castle and it’s falling down around them,’’ he said.

Victoria's building authority should establish a taskforce to act on hundreds of ''slab heave'' cases that have left many new homes in Melbourne's west and northern suburbs damaged beyond repair, the law firm says.

The Victorian Building Authority faces calls to set up a ''waffle slab taskforce'' to determine compensation for home owners affected by shoddy building practices.

"We think the volume builders will see the sense in trying to work together with claimants to reach a resolution otherwise it will just become litigation armageddon,’’ Mr Hardwick said.

Slab heave is caused by soil movement under the foundations of poorly built houses and can result in significant structural damage costing thousands of dollars to fix.

The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal this week found one of Australia's largest home builders, Metricon, liable for Mr Hooper's defective home.

The case was the first to win demolition and replacement costs for an entire home and has potential ramifications for the industry.

Metricon blamed the slab movement on landscaping in the home's garden. ''This case is unique and the technical aspects being contested are not applicable to other Metricon homes,'' director Alex Twomey said.

Home owners generally shy away from taking on builders because of the cost and difficulty of proving them at fault, Mr Hooper's lawyer, Hayden Legro, said.

But Slater & Gordon said it had 160 clients with similar claims.

Solicitor Robert Auricchio said a taskforce was needed to determine the number of homes affected or likely to be affected.

It should also make sure there were no health and safety risks associated with roof trusses on slab-heave damaged properties and establish an independent, industry-funded dispute resolution scheme, he said.

A Slater & Gordon submission to the Department of Treasury's recent review of building consumer protection guidelines said many homes underpinned with a ''waffle slab'' system had critical defects.

The submission said home owners were unable to get their builder, Consumer Affairs or the Building Commission to look at the problem.

''Many of the home owners have reported making unanswered complaints to their builders for years without resolution,'' it said.

Master Builders Association of Victoria chief executive Radley de Silva said it was premature to call for wider action after only one case.

''We are aware of cases where home builders are working with clients to deal with slab heave, following the end of a decade-long drought,'' he said.

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/business/slater--gordon-calls-for-taskforce-to-act-on-faulty-house-slabs-20140401-35wbz.html#ixzz34fots2mT>