

# Blitz on builders

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INCOMPETENT and "undesirable" domestic builders face a crackdown by the State Government.

But Planning Minister Rob Maclellan admitted the government had limited powers to deregister shonky operators.

He was responding to a *Herald Sun* investigation that revealed thousands of Victorians had fallen victim to new rules that allowed almost anyone to register as a qualified builder.

Mr Maclellan said the body that approved registration, the Building Control Commission, had managed to remove only five rogue builders when annual

By DIMITRI SERGHIS

registrations were renewed in May. He said it was a legal minefield to try to rub out suspect builders.

"Trying to get a registration struck out is very difficult unless we have enough resources and good proof," Mr Maclellan said.

But a prominent industry source said the government did not have enough resources to check Victoria's 11,000 builders.

"The system is geared only to respond to complaints lodged by consumers," the source said.

Mr Maclellan said one of the major problems in checking past financial dealings was that



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bankruptcy was a federal matter, and the system "falls over itself" to forgive bankrupts.

"You can get discharged from bankruptcy in six months, and if you are discharged, you are not considered a bankrupt," he said.

"This... allows people who probably should not be builders to do so." He called on states and territories to implement a national set of uniform laws governing builder registration.

A federal taskforce, called National Building Australia, is considering the introduction of a uniform system of builder insurance and registration.

The Housing Industry Association launched a separate campaign yesterday aimed at cracking down on shady operators.

State director Carolyn Lloyd said opportunist building companies falsely claiming to be HIA members faced legal action.

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