

Down the plugshole

Toplace steps up to replace 380 'flawed' unit bathrooms

Toplace owner Jean Nassif, with his wife Nissy.



EXCLUSIVE
LINDA SILMALLS
CHIEF REPORTER

ALMOST 380 bathrooms in a Sydney apartment complex have been voluntarily replaced after an inspection initiated by property developer Jean Nassif uncovered flaws in five.

Mr Nassif, who is the owner and founding director of the Toplace Group, had invited NSW Building Commissioner David Chandler to inspect his buildings to showcase the work of his company.

Mr Chandler and his team chose a development in Pemberton Rd in Botany to visit as the principal certifier, Vlerio "Vic" Lilli, had recently had his accreditation cancelled.

Mr Lilli was banned for five years by NSW Fair Trading for the substandard way he signed off building work at an apartment block in Castle Hill, which was also being developed by Toplace.

The first site visit took place in May, with inspectors focusing on "moisture management" in internal and external



David Chandler.

waterproofing. It is understood waterproofing was chosen as the focus because the previous principal certifier had failed to keep complete records of critical stage inspections that he had allegedly undertaken.

An independent waterproofing expert chosen by the Building Commissioner was then invited to undertake "destructive" testing of three bathrooms, including the removal of some tiles, to determine if the rooms were compliant.

The Sunday Telegraph understands the inspection uncovered flaws in each of the bathrooms examined. As a result, the inspection was

broadened to include another two randomly-selected bathrooms, with similar concerns raised.

It is understood the "defect" related to the moisture management system in the wet areas, where a subcontractor had applied a thinner waterproof film than what was required.

After Toplace was informed of the flaws, it is understood the company voluntarily chose to undertake "significant, remedial works" in all bathrooms in the complex.

Better Regulation and Innovation Minister Kevin Anderson said: "I'm pleased Toplace voluntarily agreed to replace more than 300 bathrooms even before our tough new building legislation commenced."

A spokesman for Toplace said it had invited the commissioner in to view its work to provide "the strongest possible product to consumers".

A new principal certifier has been engaged by Toplace and he declared the works to be fully compliant with the Building Code of Australia, he said.

"Toplace is continuing to work with the Commissioner to develop industry best practice in various ways."