

Calls for certifiers to get house in order

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URBAN AFFAIRS

QUESTIONS are being asked about problems with the system of private certification for new homes and apartments, with a private certifier under investigation for having allegedly signed off on a house in a luxury development that needed at least \$118,000 worth of work to bring it up to the legal standard.

Independent consultants have warned they are seeing increasing amounts of substandard construction approved by private certifiers hired by developers of multi-dwelling buildings.

Gillian and Stephen Kozicki

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Gillian Kozicki

contracted to buy what they thought was their dream home, a four-bedroom townhouse in a multi-dwelling development in The Chase Road, Turrumurra. It had been certified for occupation by Fitzgerald Building Certifiers.

But consultants engaged by the Kozickis allegedly found at least \$118,000 worth of work was needed to bring the home up to compliance with NSW building standards and with BASIX, the legal sustainability requirements for new homes.

The consultants are critical of the private certification system in NSW. "Non-compliance to minimum building standards is something I have increasingly seen over recent property inspections, yet the subject property has been certified compliant by

private certifiers or sometimes council," said Dominic Ogburn of Access Property Services, who identified problems with the Chase Road property.

His concerns were backed by Dick Clarke from Building Designers Australia, who identified alleged BASIX breaches in the house. "The significant breaches we found in that building, they were not just a builders' oversight, they were carefully thought through cost-cutting or deliberate attempts to stick with a preconceived architectural style."

When the Kozickis presented their concerns last month to the developer, Xiang Rong Constructions, it exercised a right to rescind the contract of sale, 36 hours before settlement.

Three houses in the same development are on the market at more than \$1.35million.

The Kozickis have made a formal complaint to the Building Professionals Board. "The more questions we sought answers to, the more questions arose with this development," Mrs Kozicki said. "We are incredibly disappointed that we have not been able to buy the property."

They are now renting, having sold their home when they entered into the contract to buy the Chase Road house.

"It doesn't help us with regard to this at all. I'd like to see the system work. It didn't work for us," Mrs Kozicki said.

Fitzgerald Building Certifiers declined to comment on the matter while the board investigated the allegations.

A spokeswoman from Xiang Rong Constructions said she was not aware of the complaint and declined to comment on the Chase Road development.

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