

# EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE

## WHAT IS EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE?

Expanded polystyrene is a type of thermoplastic cladding that has been widely used in the Australian building industry over the past 20 years. It has been favoured for its light weight, low cost, ease of installation and thermal insulating properties, but is not considered suitable for most multi-story buildings. It is typically covered with render to look like rendered concrete.

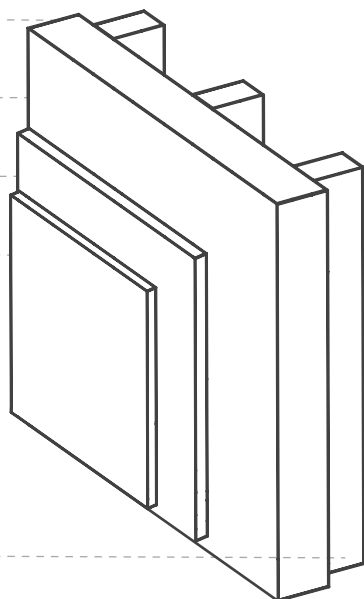
METAL OR FIBROUS MESH REINFORCEMENTS

EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE

WATERPROOF RENDER

FINISH COATING

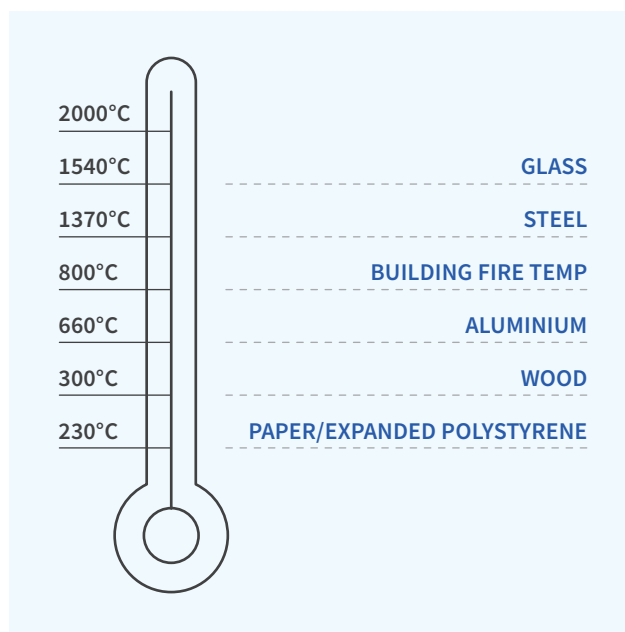
TIMBER FRAMEWORK



## WHAT IS THE FIRE RISK POSED BY EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE?

Expanded polystyrene is highly combustible, and has the potential to ignite, melt or warp when exposed to temperatures of 230 degrees Celsius or higher. With a typical building fire burning at around 800 degrees Celsius, expanded polystyrene can be very dangerous and quickly spread fire to other parts of a building. While chemical fire retardants can be added to expanded polystyrene, they are often ineffective in large fires and can leach over time.

## MELTING AND IGNITION POINTS



## HOW DO I IDENTIFY EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE?

Try tapping on a rendered surface such as a wall. If the sound is hollow, it may indicate that a lightweight building material has been used, such as expanded polystyrene.

## WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ON EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE?

The [National Construction Code](#) dictates how expanded polystyrene can be used in Australia. You can read the current code as well as the 2016 code at [ncc.abcb.gov.au](http://ncc.abcb.gov.au).