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Safety concerns about proper use of power boards highlighted in coroner's finding

Victorian Coroner Leveasque Peterson has highlighted safety concerns about the proper use of power boards in Victorian homes following the death of a 77-year-old man in a residential fire.

At approximately 1am on 17 July 2025, neighbours noticed a fire had broken out in Christopher Shaw's Carisbrook home and called emergency services. Neighbours approached the house and attempted to raise Christopher but did not receive a response. The Country Fire Authority attended the scene, extinguished the fire and located Christopher deceased inside the house.

A forensic officer from the Victoria Police Forensic Services Centre investigated the scene and identified one melted power board and another that had been completely destroyed on the floor of the sunroom – where Christopher's computers were kept plugged in along with equipment related to his interest in amateur radio. They concluded that the most likely source of the fire ignition was an electrical fault with the power board.

As part of the investigation, Coroner Peterson sought to understand the fire risks associated with power boards and identified several issues related to the misuse of or use of faulty power boards including:

- overloading power boards, especially with high-draw appliances
- connecting multiple power boards (or extension cords)
- using old or damaged power boards
- having untidy or tangled wires.

Submissions from Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) showed that the risk of fires associated with power boards increases in winter, with 14 fires reported in the winter of 2024, followed by only six the following summer. According to FRV, between June 2024 and January 2026, 3.6 fires per month were ignited by power boards. Court data shows that from 2015 to the present, there have been 26 deaths involving fires caused by an electrical fault – power boards were implicated in five of those deaths, including Christopher's.

In the finding published today, Coroner Peterson noted that safety messaging about proper use of power boards is primarily available to consumers on Energy Safe Victoria's (ESV) website and social media accounts and through FRV's community engagement program. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is responsible for the national consumer product recall system, and between 2016 and 2026, the ACCC published 10 power board related recalls.

Under the *Electricity Safety Act 1998 (Vic)*, ESV is responsible for regulating electrical product safety, including power boards. All power boards sold in Australia must comply with the standard AS/NZS 3105, developed by Standards Australia. There are no similar controls for power boards purchased from overseas retailers and ESV does not have powers under the legislation to require fire danger warnings on power board packaging or labelling.

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Media Release



Coroners Court
of Victoria

The Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action released its *Energy Safe Roadmap* in December 2025. Action 2 of the Roadmap states that strengthening labelling oversight will help identify unsafe electrical products earlier. Coroner Peterson commented, “I fully support Action 2 of the Roadmap and encourage that the Victorian Government move to broaden ESV’s powers accordingly with the view that Victorians can be better informed regarding potential fire hazards affecting items of daily use.”

The finding can be accessed [here](#).

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