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New city fire station facade 'falling apart'

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Perth's long-awaited \$11 million central fire station, which has been vacant since its completion last year, faces further delays after chunks of its facade came unstuck and fell to the ground.

It could be months until the state-of-the-art station in Wellington Street is commissioned for firefighters now based in the Fire and Emergency Services Authority headquarters in Hay Street.

When the former Labor government announced the building's construction in 2006, it was to be operating by last year at a cost of \$9.5 million.

The United Fire Fighters Union, which has campaigned strongly against moving, said the latest problems were further proof the plan was poorly researched from the start.

President Kevin Jolly learnt of the building issues at a meeting with FESA officials yesterday.

"We've been told the Donnybrook stone facade is falling off because of poor workmanship," he said. "FESA is now waiting on a full report into the condition of that stone before deciding whether the whole lot has to be replaced."

The delay could affect FESA's relocation master plan which includes the administration

moving to a \$50 million building at Cockburn Central.

"The central station was supposed to have closed as part of that plan last November, then March and now we're into June and we haven't got a moving date," Mr Jolly said. "No one would listen to the firefighters who said the whole proposal was flawed. It's no secret that we didn't want to move and now people can see why."

Mr Jolly said the new station, which will have four fire engine bays, would have to undergo occupational health and safety tests before being manned.

Police and Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson

told Parliament in December that he had toured the new station and that it would open soon. "I have to say I was very impressed," he said. "It is a great functional building. The amenities are state-of-the-art and the accommodation for firefighters, who work around-the-clock, is also first rate."

FESA said it was waiting for the Department of Building Management and Works to address outstanding issues.

"Final checks are now being completed and any defects rectified," it said. "The BMW has engaged an independent qualified consultant to test the application of the stone tile facade."