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TALKIN’ TIMBER

Monthly updates from top industry identities with Tim Johnston, VAFI

It's only March and it's already shaping up to be a busy year in the forest and wood products industry.

Firstly, let me introduce myself; my name is Tim Johnston and I am the CEO of the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI). VAFI is the peak body for the forest and wood products industry in Victoria, representing the entire lifecycle of forestry and wood products, including forest growers, harvest and haul businesses, wood and paper processors, and associated businesses across both the native forest and plantations sectors. We are proud to work in, with, and for this industry. We strongly believe that we are one industry; we are an integrated supply chain that employs up to 80,000 Victorians both directly and indirectly.

In addition to 2016 shaping up to be a very busy year, it will also most likely be a challenging year economically and a year that's filled with change. As the industry moves ahead, we need to grow timber as a resource, grow its value, and grow the skills across the supply chain to ensure we have a strong, vibrant and sustainable industry. We need to ensure that our businesses remain sound and robust to continue to support the investments, commitments, employees and communities that rely on the industry.

We need to continue to develop and nurture industry leadership so that we can work effectively and productively with governments, communities and customers. We’re an industry that operates regionally, in major cities, and on a global scale. We’re a world-class industry, but too often we have felt the impact of poorly conceived public policy and unintended consequences. This year is the year to band together to ensure our future.

In late November 2015, the Victorian Government released the Terms of Reference for the Forest Industry Taskforce. The taskforce provides a forum and process for dialogue and leadership among stakeholders in the forest, fibre and wood industries, unions and forest conservation groups. VAFI is heavily involved in the taskforce process and takes its role of representing the forest and wood products industry very seriously. We can assure you VAFI is working tirelessly to ensure the best outcome for everyone. At this stage discussions are only just beginning, but updates will be made public as often as possible.

In closing, I would like to wish everyone in the industry success for the exciting and challenging year ahead.

TIM JOHNSTON

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This survey is a guide only as to the ‘state of our industry’.

KEY FINDINGS
Performance against budget
• 74 per cent made or exceeded budget (18 per cent higher compared to January) – consisting of medium businesses (59 per cent) and small businesses (41 per cent).
• 26 per cent either missed budget or missed budget badly (18 per cent lower compared to January) – consisting of small businesses (83 per cent), and medium businesses (17 per cent).

Staff hires
• 35 per cent employed more staff (7 per cent increase compared to January). Of the companies who employed more staff, 88 per cent made or exceeded budget whilst 12 per cent just missed budget.
• 65 per cent reported no changes (2 per cent decrease compared to January). Of the companies that reported no changes, 67 per cent made or exceeded budget whilst 33 per cent just missed budget.

METROPOLITAN VS. REGIONAL
The majority of survey respondents for January were located in Victoria (43 per cent) and Queensland (27 per cent). In Victoria, making or exceeding budget was more likely for businesses in regional areas (100 per cent), while in Queensland, making or exceeding budget was more likely for businesses in regional areas (100 per cent).

Profile of survey participants this month
The participants for February’s survey included frame and truss fabricators (43 per cent), followed by wholesalers/Suppliers (22 per cent) while the remainder (35 per cent) consisted of flooring retailers and consultants.

IN THE NEXT EDITION OF
TimberTrader News talks to Joe Meznar of Meznar Furniture about the company’s products, preferred timbers and the technologies that make the business possible.

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TMA
Peter Alexander

In the January edition of TimberTrader News, Emma Watt set out the changes proposed for the TMA. I am very pleased to announce all the changes have gone through and we now have a new look TMA. Eric Seigers, through his company the market bytes, has successfully purchased the Timber Advisory Centre in Blackburn from the TMA. This will allow the centre to become a truly commercial operation promoting timber, which can only be great for our industry. I am sure you will be hearing more from Eric shortly.

Eric will be doing all the secretariat work for the TMA so, from the outside looking in, the operation will continue as it has always done.

I would firstly like to thank Richard Hill for his service to the TMA over many years. Richard has had to step back from the presidency for health reasons but will continue as a committee member. Ron Caddy has taken up the vice presidency and I have been given the honour of president.

Emma will still be doing all the industrial relations and representing all members at the Fair Work Commission, so please, if you have any problems with staff or if you just have a question, ring Emma on 0411 708 073. Emma will also be doing member visits to discuss the industrial relations landscape as well as promoting the employee training program and the TMA OHS service.

The committee will be doing advocacy work on behalf of members and the industry, as we have always done. Once again, if you have an issue, please call Emma or one of your board members, who are listed below.

We are very excited to promote our training scheme through Timber Training Creswick (TTC). We have board members in common with TTC, and we firmly believe that its industry focused training is desperately needed in this industry. The great part is that employers get to choose elective modules for training, leading to a better, customised training experience for the workplace. It is a known fact that with training (no matter how basic) comes better employees, improved quality and increased productivity.

Legislation requires that occupational health and safety (OH&S) be one of those ‘top of mind’ topics for business owners and senior managers. If you are visited by a WorkSafe Inspector, you are potentially going to be asked to demonstrate that you have a systematic and enforced approach to safety. The best way to ensure that you comply is to have an OH&S management system in place and working, and have it audited regularly to ensure that it still works as designed. Please ask Emma about the TMA OH&S service, designed to keep your business on track!

Your TMA board members, who voluntarily provide their time and commitment to their industry association, are:

- President: Mr Peter Alexander
- Vice President: Mr Ron Caddy
- Board: Mrs Myriam Webster, Mr Clive Dossetor, Mr Peter Bennett, Mr Hugh Turner, Mr Richard Hill

Your TMA board members, who voluntarily provide their time and commitment to their industry association, are:

- President: Mr Peter Alexander
- Vice President: Mr Ron Caddy
- Board: Mrs Myriam Webster, Mr Clive Dossetor, Mr Peter Bennett, Mr Hugh Turner, Mr Richard Hill

“Please note that the TMA OH&S service, designed to keep your business on track!”

VICTORIA

The placement of trainees and apprentices in Victoria is gathering momentum with a number of companies requesting our services as a result of the improvement in market conditions. Rhonda Moore, who has past experience with MEGT, will at this stage be handling our operations in Victoria and will also be conducting a membership drive to add to the 18 who have already joined.

TIMBER TALLYING

It is pleasing to note an increase in the break bulk timber being exported to Australia from Canada and the US West Coast. Under the leadership of Kevin Kelly, this timber is unloaded at Port Kembla, moved to our yard where it is sorted, stacked and quarantine approved, before it’s delivered to the importers.

IRONASH

Australian Sustainable Hardwoods

We are very excited to promote our training scheme through Timber Training Creswick (TTC). We have board members in common with TTC, and we firmly believe that its industry focused training is desperately needed in this industry. The great part is that employers get to choose elective modules for training, leading to a better, customised training experience for the workplace. It is a known fact that with training (no matter how basic) comes better employees, improved quality and increased productivity.
ASSOCIATION UPDATE

“Interest by TABMA members nationwide in our recently released industrial relations advice line has exceeded expectations, with the line receiving many calls in the December–February period.”

COLIN FITZPATRICK

STRATEGY MEETING
A TABMA Group strategy meeting was held in Sydney 3-4 February. Among the agenda items were:
• Vision and mission
• A SWOT analysis
• Key strategies to move our businesses forward
• Priorities and key indicators of success
• Action plans.
The meeting was attended by personnel from all divisions, and from the meeting a three-year plan was formulated that will be submitted to the TABMA Australia board of directors prior to June.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
Interest by TABMA members nationwide in our recently released industrial relations advice line has exceeded expectations, with the line receiving many calls in the December–February period. As previously advised, the advice line is provided free of charge up to and including 30 June 2016 for all TABMA members. The advice line number is 1300 564 309 and members must quote their TABMA membership number.

WORKPLACE DRUG & ALCOHOL TESTING DEVICES
In an exclusive arrangement, TTIA has teamed up with a major national supplier of drug and alcohol testing equipment to deliver significant savings off the standard cost of a range of lightweight, accurate and reliable testing devices that allow exceptionally fast drug and alcohol blood concentration results. This is a major initiative for TTIA members, which we anticipate will contribute to safer workplaces in the timber products industry.

TTIA
Brian Beecroft

COLIN FITZPATRICK

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ASSOCIATION UPDATE

The equipment includes smaller personal devices that can be used by company staff in cars as well as in the workplace, to larger wall-mounted devices for a production environment.

The equipment is Australian Standard certified AS3547 Type 11 and is currently used by 23 law enforcement organisations including the UK Police and the United Nations.

The alcohol breathalyser, AlcoQant 6020 plus, has become the leading handheld breathalyser in Australia, Europe and the UK.

Part of the breakthrough arrangement is that we have negotiated with the supplier to trade in TTIA members’ used and antiquated breathalyser devices when a new device is purchased, further reducing the cost. Basic training is offered online with each industrial breathalyser purchased.

Please contact the TTIA office on 02 9264 0011 for further information.

WHS & MANAGEMENT TRAINING SERVICES EXPANSION

In 2016, the TTIA has expanded its range of workplace safety and management courses at reduced member rates, both in-house and through a new partnership with a major national workplace health and safety training provider.

The range of courses now offered to TTIA members include First Aid, Fire Safety and Extinguisher training, Warden training, Operating Breathing Apparatus, Training & Assessment Certificate, Health and Safety Representative, Advanced Life Support, Work Safety at Heights and Frontline Management.

Members are invited to contact the TTIA office on 02 9264 0011 to further discuss your training requirements.

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Right: The TTIA has teamed up with a major national supplier of drug and alcohol testing equipment to deliver significant savings to the industry. © simez78 / Shutterstock

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In this edition I am sharing a collection of industry observations, concerns, trends and helpful hints.

Head Office

Feedback from WADIC

I am sure it would not surprise many of you to know that the Australian Bureau of Statistics report for the last quarter of 2015 shows an increase of 3.6 per cent in the indexed price of building and construction from the previous quarter. According to the report, "the rise was mainly driven by rises in the cost of non-residential construction materials and the lack of a suitable and cost-effective local domestic resource. This does not bode well for the timber manufacturing industry and many of us in the industry know the constant battle when competing with aluminium, and to a lesser degree uPVC, just on the price differential. An increasing amount of high-end residential projects are accommodating slimline aluminium assemblies in a chunky timber frame to soften the aesthetics of the aluminium. I don't believe that we, as an industry, are adequately promoting the benefits of timber for use on the kinds of prestigious jobs that should readily lend themselves to bespoke timber windows and doors. How many people realise, when stipulating aluminium for their job, that it requires regular washing with soap and water? This washing prolongs the painted finish but the gloss and colour will alter with the onset of chalking after a period of several years and, to add insult to injury, you cannot paint aluminium or change the colour. The current European and UK trend for windows and doors is towards uPVC and timber with very little aluminium now used. Now is the time for manufacturers of well-designed timber windows and doors to talk to their architects and builders about entering the 2016 Timber Design Awards for any projects completed in the last 18 months. The Australian Bureau of Statistics also reports that the manufacturing sector of "carpentry and joinery" – described as covering the manufacture of timber doors and door systems, pre-fabricated wooden panels and timber cabinets – equates to 2,200 businesses with a total revenue of $3 billion and 12,800 employees. It is estimated that only 10 per cent of this number belong to a relevant association. Of those remaining, how many have tested to be compliant to the Standard AS2047 for windows and doors in residential buildings? There are reports of builders building their own timber window and door assemblies on site, which not only results in a product holding little finesse, but also raises issues of non-compliance.

GLASS: NON-COMPLIANT AND UNFIT FOR PURPOSE

As of late there have been reports of imported safety glass failing. Toughened glass, which is heat soaked and reduces the likelihood of failure, is deemed as safety glass. I have been receiving an increasing amount of members registering their frustration with suppliers who require a 24-hour response regarding faulty glass; at times it is impossible to turn around a report within this time frame. Not only are some deliveries too large and complex to check within 24 hours, but in many instances, in order to check the panels adequately they need to be cleaned off (protective films removed). Compounding this issue, faults are often not discernible in the factory light and only become apparent in the product after it has been installed. At which point the glass supplier admits the glass is unfit for purpose but only agrees to resupply the glass. This means the manufacturer is left having to uninstall, re-manufacture, paint and pay for the reinstatement. Not great news when it is three floors up from an escapement!

Yes, it does fall back on the window and door manufacturer to do his or her diligence, but the glass should not be leaving the glass supplier in the first place; the glass suppliers need to do their diligence as well. We all understand that time is money. Why should we have to pay our staff to clean numerous panels of glass only to find they need to go back to the supplier, with no compensation given for staff time. I have known some glass to be sent back multiple times in order to get it right. The glass standard AS1288 is far too lenient on what is deemed fit for purpose and what is not. Too many faults are allowed to exist in a pane of glass indiscernible at a certain distance in daylight. I will discuss with you another day the challenges of IGUs that greatly affect VIC, SA and TAS and some NSW country areas and that IGUs are not the only answer for sound attenuation.

BUSHFIRE PRODUCTS DEEMED TO SATISFY UNDER AS3959

It is quite challenging for manufacturing businesses that want to fabricate traditional panel doors in a bushfire area. This is an issue that raises its head in particular for WADIC members in South Australia. I would like to point out that for the low Bushfire Attack Levels (BAL) of 12.5–19, AS3959 requires unprotected side-hung external doors (glazed or solid), manufactured out of the required material (e.g. timber 659 kg/m² or greater), at the required minimum of 38 mm for the first 400 mm above the threshold. For a glazed door you only need to use 6 mm toughened glass in order to reduce the bottom rail to a more appropriate size. As for traditional panel doors used extensively in South Australia, a bottom rail of 400 mm is not appropriate, but if the panels were of a non-combustible material it would suffice just as a kick plate would. Veneers are not usually recommended for unprotected external doors but a paint finish will disguise the panels externally. You can use your normal plant on moulds and decorative beading. WADIC is investigating the ability to find a material where a veneer could be applied internally to allow for clear finish in that application but more on that later.

I will keep you posted in my next article as to the projects that WADIC is undertaking this calendar year and their progress.

ASSOCIATION UPDATE

ASSOCIATION UPDATE

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Feedback from WADIC

Head Office

by Bronwyn Foord

In this edition I am sharing a collection of industry observations, concerns, trends and helpful hints.
XLam appoints new CEO

As Cross Laminated Timber (CLT) continues to grow in popularity, supplier XLam continues its growth with the appointment of new Chief Executive Officer Gary Caulfield.

Robin Jack, XLam’s co-founder, director, and retiring CEO, joined the XLam board’s worldwide hunt for his replacement. Robin said they were focused on finding the right person with extensive experience in the prefabricated construction industry to join the team.

"Gary brings us a wealth of world class, innovative construction and exemplary leadership experience. He has successfully delivered major prefabricated construction projects in New Zealand and overseas, including involvement in finance, legal, design, and site management," Robin said. Robin’s strategic growth plans for XLam, and his personal plans, are now on track – and while he’s stepping down he will retain a keen interest as a director on the XLam Board.

XLam’s Chairman, Martin Kriewaldt, has accepted Robin’s offer of retirement as CEO while welcoming his ongoing involvement as a shareholder and director on the board.

"Mr Jack is a successful entrepreneur with exceptional foresight," Martin said. "XLam started as a conversation involving Robin and his brother Ian to create a market for high quality, efficient and sustainable building materials as a renewable and sustainable alternative to polystyrene, the petroleum-based insulation that is currently the standard solution in the market. With a great start, and now in a fast growing market, XLam are one of the leading providers in Europe and the US."

WHAT’S NEW IN INDUSTRY?

A new start in Nannup

After a major fire in December 2014, Western Australia’s Nannup Timber Processing (NTP) has re-built and expanded by recently announcing the installation of six new drying kilns.

The new chambers include a residue burning heat source which has increased efficiency for the mill by over 100 per cent. A state-of-the-art remote access control system provides monitoring, which also aids in the efficiency of the re-started dry processing mill. A new small log mill has been added to the existing sawmill to work with smaller logs and maximise this valuable resource.

"The decision to rebuild and expand operations, and even employ more staff, was an easy one as demand for Jarrah timber, and our engineered Jarrah (aJarrah) product range, continues to grow," Robin said.

Heavy vehicle safety a step closer

A nationally consistent approach to heavy vehicle safety has moved one step closer with the launch of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator’s (NHVR) revised National Heavy Vehicle Inspection Manual.

"The manual is the first stage in developing a single national approach to heavy vehicle roadworthiness," he said. The manual applies to all vehicles with a gross vehicle mass (GVM) or aggregate trailer mass (ATM) greater than 4.5 t and a gross vehicle mass (GVM) or aggregate trailer mass (ATM) greater than 4.5 t and

Swedish scientists use wood to create biodegradable alternative to Styrofoam

We may soon be able to say goodbye to polystyrene, the petroleum-based material that is used to make Styrofoam. In what looks like an ordinary bicycle helmet, Swedish designers have replaced Styrofoam with a new shock-absorbing material made with renewable and biodegradable wood-based material.

$9.4 million boost for innovation in wood products sector

The Australian Government’s decision to allow for the matching of voluntary contributions to Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA) could lead to an increase of $9.4 million investment in innovation for the industry.

The decision was announced in conjunction with the government’s Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) and commits the government to co-matching up to $4.7 million over four years, matched by industry funds, for additional research, development and extension. This will create a total pool of $9.4 million in funds.

"This is a great announcement and ratifies one of the key recommendations of the Productivity Commission into rural research and development corporations," said Ric Sinclair, FWPA’s managing director.

I would like to thank the Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water, The Hon. Barnaby Joyce, for taking this step and I am confident that this will be widely welcomed across the forest and wood products sector," Mr Sinclair added.

National Construction Code change: the industry responds

The recently announced changes to the National Construction Code (NCC) will open up Australia’s timber industry up to significant new sales opportunities, and the industry is buzzing.

The timber industry is expecting a greater demand for both lightweight and heavy timber building systems as a result of amendments to the NCC, effective May 2016. Following the announcement early last week the industry’s peak bodies provided their comments to the news with resounding support.

THE REACTION

The Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI) Tim Johnston, Chief Executive Officer of VAFI, said the acceptance of the mid-rise timber buildings amendment proposal will make it easier for timber to be used in mid-rise building construction (up to 25 m).

“These changes are extremely positive for both the construction and wood products industry, and is a result of many years of hard work.

“From this change we should see an increase in timber being chosen by the construction industry, and the opportunity for more innovative and diverse designs, in turn, providing a more competitive environment for consumers,” he said.

Forest and Wood Products Association (FWPA) Ric Sinclair, managing director of the FWPA, said the code change was the biggest market opportunity for timber in 30 years.

“The increased use of both lightweight and massive timber building systems is poised to generate increased awareness and uptake of wood and wood products, with a huge effect that has the potential to extend beyond the buildings immediately involved,” Mr Sinclair said.

Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) Ross Hampton, CEO of AFPA, said “Using timber instead of conventional building materials can reduce construction costs by up to 25 per cent. Not only does manufacturing timber buildings create fewer carbon emissions than the alternatives – such as concrete and steel – but timber also stores carbon which drastically reduces the environmental impact of the built environment. The FWPA is so pleased for championing these changes for the NCC. The sustainability and renewability of timber products can now be utilised even more and create a real difference,” Mr Hampton concluded.

Frame 2016 event

Kevin Eazed, conference director of Frame 2016, said “Timber and wood construction is a viable alternative to current systems due to faster construction pace, site safety improvements, less complexity on site and lower costs overall.”

Mr Eazed said that presentations at this year’s Frame event, to be held in May, will cover the NCC changes and the attached opportunities.

HAVE A NEW PRODUCT ON THE MARKET? DON’T KEEP IT TO YOURSELF!

If you are launching a product or your business has an industry announcement, send it through to news@timbertradernews.com.au for the chance to be featured here.
I have been reading *TimberTrader News* since... I honestly can’t remember when I started! We have been getting the magazine for a long time. Definitely over 10 years or so. My company recently celebrated the business’s 50th anniversary, and I knew I have been reading the magazine for a big chunk of that time. What I like about *TimberTrader News* is that it is focused on the industry I’m in. It’s great to see Australia-wide content about my peers mixed with industry news – that’s the information that joiners, like myself, like to read. Generics building industry magazines don’t interest me very much.

Before I was in my current role I was... very young! I did work as a draughtsman while I was at university doing my engineering degree. Since then I have been in the family business for my entire working life. I did take a two-year break to recharge my batteries, but have been with Palermo Joinery for over 30 years.

My motivation to get out of bed every morning and go to work is... the clients, for sure, they are the priority. My employees also motivate me to go to work every day, nothing will. He is a smart man and someone I really admire, not only for his work ethic but for what he was able to achieve since arriving in Australia as an Italian immigrant in 1956. Today he is 83 and still getting to work most mornings before I do. If that can’t motivate me to go to work every day, nothing will. He is a smart man and someone I really admire, not only for his work ethic but for what he was able to achieve since arriving in Australia as an Italian immigrant in 1956. Today he is 83 and still getting to work most mornings before I do. If that can’t motivate me to go to work every day, nothing will.

My biggest inspiration has been... my father-in-law, which is probably pretty obvious by this stage. To think that he arrives at work before me most mornings and is 83 and still working full-time is pretty remarkable. For 50 years he has shown an amazing work ethic by being here Monday to Friday, and many Saturdays. He imparts a lot of knowledge on to us – if you can’t follow his work ethic you haven’t learnt much. He is an amazing man.

When I am not working you can find me... with my two favourite ‘F’ words: family and football. I’m a mad Collingwood fan!

T2 Blue treated timber framing: safe to handle, safe to use

Australian builders are increasingly using treated framing as their preferred structural material. For many home owners, the low cost peace-of-mind of a 25-year termite warranty is one of the easiest building decisions to make.

However, many builders remain unaware that despite its long-term protection against termite attack, Hyne Timber T2 Blue is safe for humans and all mammal life forms. Containing only non-hazardous ingredients, the termite protection in T2 Blue is also found in products used on children and pets such as head lice shampoos, flea collars and even some lines of clothing. The blue colouring is only for identification purposes (it’s actually clothing dye) and is intended to fade quickly when directly exposed to UV light. It’s not uncommon for excess dye to rub off the timber surface, so always follow basic hygiene guidelines and wash hands regularly.

As with all timber products, the use of gloves and protective eyewear is recommended. Building suppliers such as North Shore Timbers in Sydney only stock treated timber in response to customer demand for quality, termite resistant homes which are built to last. Back in 2006, the manager of North Shore Timbers Warniewood, Andrew Burt, enjoyed a tour of both Hyne Timber’s glue laminating plant and Tuan Mill near Maryborough and shortly thereafter, commenced stocking treated timber for their customers.

Now, nine years later and only stocking treated timber, they haven’t looked back. Andrew said “Our customers are quality builders who take pride in their work and want to ensure they are using the best materials, building their reputations and business.” They use T2 Blue for their frames and trusses purely to provide termite resistance that is also guaranteed by Hyne Timber. “Home owners and builders alike need to understand that no insurance company in the country will insurance against termites. “Prevention is the only cost-effective protection against termites so it’s understandable why quality builders will only use treated T2 Blue for their frame and trusses.”

Hyne Timber has been manufacturing timber framing in Australia for 133 years, so it’s safe to say they know a bit about supplying quality. Hyne Timber T2 Blue is a renewable resource, manufactured in Australia using Australian plantation pine. Further information about T2 Blue including the Material Safety Data Sheet is available on the Hyne Timber website at www.hyne.com.au

North Shore Timbers are located at Thornleigh, Chatswood, Warniewood, Waterloo, Gosford and Miranda. Details can be found at www.nshnt.com.au
TABMA’s 2016 outlook

TimberTrader News speaks to TABMA CEO Colin Fitzpatrick about the benefits the association offers, and its plans for 2016 and beyond.

THE BASICS
TABMA was founded in 1940 as a member-based association that could help individuals get access to timber during World War II, when timber was more difficult to obtain. We are a member-based association with six divisions, including membership, Workforce & Career Development Pty Ltd (our GTO), FITEC Australia Pty Ltd (our RTO), Timber Tallying Pty Ltd, Building Trade Credit and TABMA Financial.

TABMA MEMBERSHIP
For a nominal fee, those in the timber industry can become a member of TABMA, and in return they receive a myriad of services and benefits which if used wisely would more than cover their membership fee.

TABMA WORKFORCE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT
Within our workforce and career development division, we place trainees and apprentices with host employers. Trainees and apprentices are employed by us and paid by us. In fact, we cover their long service leave, superannuation, holiday pay, and everything of that nature. We then host the trainee or apprentice out to an employer, who adds to their workforce without adding to their workforce, in that the trainee or apprentice is not actually an employee of the host organisation. If the employer is unhappy with the apprentice or trainee, they can contact us. We’ll take the trainee/apprentice out and replace them.

When I started with TABMA in 2008, we had 43 trainees and apprentices placed. Today we have almost 250. According to the latest figures from the Federal Department of Industry, apprentice and trainee placements are declining nationally. We’ve bucked that trend – we’re 30 per cent up. We’re now the largest employer in the timber industry of trainees and apprentices, and still growing. We now have trainees and apprentices placed in every state.

FITEC AUSTRALIA
FITEC is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) that is based in Brisbane. FITEC became part of the TABMA group in October 2014. The association has always wanted to be an RTO. Initially we looked at establishing our own RTO but decided that would not be cost-effective. This then led us to FITEC.

We see FITEC as providing TABMA with enormous growth nationally over the next 3-5 years.

TIMBER TALLYING
Timber that is brought into Australia from the West Coast of the US and Canada is brought in break bulk, which means it is loose and not containerised. When that timber comes into Australia it arrives in Port Kembla. Timber Tallying takes responsibility for it once it’s unloaded. We then take it to our yard in Port Kembla to sort and stack and receive quarantine approval for the timber. We then call up the importers of the timber who then come and collect it or have it delivered.

“We’ve experienced exciting growth over the last four or five years and we want that to continue.”

COLIN FITZPATRICK
ASSOCIATION Q&A

TABMA’s trainee and apprenticeship division is an integral part of the association. We’ve got well over a hundred members in Building Trade Credit. It is a great tool to help credit managers make more informed decisions about who they should extend credit to.

TABMA FINANCIAL

TABMA has an investment portfolio that is used to underpin the association financially, giving TABMA a very strong balance sheet.

UNIVERSAL ISSUES

With TABMA providing services across a wide range of businesses in the timber industry, the association deals with many varying challenges. One common issue posed by all areas of industry are those of industrial relations, so in November 2015 TABMA entered into an agreement with NSW Business Chamber to provide industrial relations advice to all members.

All areas of industry are also looking for workplace health and safety advice, so we’re bucking up that side of association as well, whereby we can conduct audits for our members and provide them with assistance on workplace health and safety.

WORKING TOGETHER

TABMA has strong relationships with other timber associations including ForestWorks, AFPA, Timber Queensland, WADC, FTMA and FWPA.

LOOKING AHEAD

Over the next year we will certainly grow our placements of trainees and apprentices, continue the expansion of FITEC, promote TABMA’s new Industrial Relations Advice Line, and develop awareness of work health and safety issues through TABMA’s WH&S Advisory Service. That’s our growth plan. In the next 2-3 years we want to see TABMA offices in every state of Australia. We’ve experienced exciting growth over the last four or five years and we want that to continue.

TimberTrader News is the industry’s top resource, including sector news, profiles on industry personalities and in-depth features.
Man on the moon

A TimberTrader News feature

Crescent Timber’s owner, Ron Gattone, has been a strong personality within the Australian timber merchant industry since the 1990s. With a lot of drive, a permanent smile, and the occasional metaphor, Ron has worked hard to create a positive work environment. TimberTrader News visited Ron and his wife Heather Gattone for this edition’s cover feature.

FROM THE BRINK
Ron Gattone is the driving force behind Crescent Timber and Hardware in Sydney’s inner-west.

Working from a site that sits remarkably close to the iconic city – with a stunning view to boot – the team at Crescent Timber have been serving customers for over 20 years, and show no sign of slowing down.

However, as Ron explains it, there is more to the Crescent Timber and Hardware site than meets the eye.

“This land has been used for various purposes over the years, and we’ve traced it back to approximately 1954 where it was just a used building material yard, and it stayed that for a number of years,” Ron says.

From a building material yard, to a box manufacturing plant, to a storage facility – in 1972 the site eventually became a timber yard owned by Tom and Ollie Reinhold.

Initially, the yard consisted merely of a very small office and basic hardware items. Their main business was selling timber.

“Tom branched out and began to manufacture timber mouldings, skirtings and architraves; cornices, beams and much more. “In the end Tom had lost a lot of passion for what he was doing, and by the late 1980s the business was pretty run down – so he was looking to sell it,” Ron recounts.

By 1991 Tom approached Ron’s brother Danny and brother-in-law Colin, who had already established a timber and hardware store in Sydney’s Alexandria.

Ron was a builder at the time, and had been for his entire working life. He had not considered another career path – that was until he was attending a family dinner in the early 1990s that changed everything.

“Colin and Danny approached me and said, ‘Ron – there is a timber yard for sale in Annandale and we’d like to buy it – as long as you join us as a business partner’. At the time I was shocked because I had never contemplated changing my profession, it never even entered my mind, but I said I’d have to think about it.”

Ron decided to take the plunge and try something new. He remembers fondly the speed at which things progressed from there.

“The first time I arrived at the business I met the wife of Tom, Lynn Rinehold, who came in to open up.

“She showed me the computers at 7.30 am and by 9.00 am she was gone. That was it! It was up to me from there,” Ron remembers.

At that point in time the business was a bit neglected, and Ron had a challenge on his hands, but within six months the company was transformed.

“This land has been used for various purposes over the years, and we’ve traced it back to approximately 1954 where it was just a used building material yard, and it stayed that for a number of years.”

RON GATTONE
WHY CULTURE IS EVERYTHING
When TimberTrader News visited Ron and his wife Heather at the Crescent Timber site, it became apparent that Ron and Heather have worked hard to maintain a positive work environment for their staff. The proof? Well – it’s in the numbers.

One of our employees that came with the business retired only six months ago. We also have staff that started in Crescent Timber’s early days, and they are still here, along the way. When Ron and Heather have created a positive work environment for their staff, we have found that the promotion of our business basically takes care of itself,” Ron says.

While Ron and Heather have created a great relationship with their customers, no operation is immune from a few bumps along the way.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES
Over the years, the unique Crescent Timber site is that it is, as fact, not owned by Ron and Heather. “The land has very peculiar zoning as a result of this varied ownership. It can only ever be used as open land, or if any structure goes on it, it must be a structure that compliments the maritime services surrounding us,” says Ron.

Ron and Heather have cultivated an impressive company culture at Crescent Timber. “A company culture that nurtures staff doesn’t just happen – you’ve got to have some philosophies in place to allow that type of culture to grow. Once you have it, your customers will recognise it,” explains Ron. At Crescent Timber the interactions staff have with their customers is crucial. “When you get to that point when you have created a positive and ongoing relationship with customers, we have found that the promotion of our business basically takes care of itself,” Ron says.

While Ron and Heather have created a great relationship with their customers, no operation is immune from a few bumps along the way.

A FUTURE UNKNOWN
While Crescent Timber is currently an established business in its picturesque location – the future of the business’s premise is actually not as uncertain as many may think.

“The future of our business operating from this site looks a little bit grim, to be honest. I’m estimating in the next five years or so, we may need to move on from here due to complexities of the site ownership,” Ron says.

A common misconception about the unique Crescent Timber site is that it is, in fact, not owned by Ron and Heather. “We’ve got a very strange site,” explains Ron. “We have a total of three landlords. They include the New South Wales State Rail Authority, Council of the City of Sydney, and the Roads and Maritime Services.

“The land has very peculiar zoning as a result of this varied ownership. It can only ever be used as open land, or if any structure goes on it, it must be a structure that compliments the maritime services surrounding us,” says Ron.

Ron is sure that the business has a bright future, but whether it will continue to operate from the crest of the Sydney waterfront is yet to be known. However, regardless of where Crescent Timber operates from, Ron and Heather have enough confidence in their team to adapt to any future changes.

“If I’m not here, my team do a wonderful job. As a business owner, leaving your business behind can make you fret! You cannot imagine what sort of feeling it is, but I’m lucky because I genuinely don’t have to worry about it,” concludes Ron.
Trueform Frame and Trusses is a business that sprouted from the collective mind of the Twitchen family. Located in Mulgrave, New South Wales, Trueform started from humble beginnings with just six employees. Now, 20 years later, the business boasts a successful team of 30.

“Computers are one of the biggest changes I’ve seen. Before our work became computerised, planning, cutting and everything to do with materials handling was more labour intensive compared to now. Now, you put the wood in one end and it comes out cut from the other.”

MARK TWITCHEN

The business has strong industry ties as a member of TITIA as well as T&MA. While it is still located in Mulgrave, about 50 km from Sydney, the business has supplied as far south as the Australian Capital Territory, and as far north as the mid-north coast.

Generally, the business usually supplies to clients a little closer to home than these far-flung reaches, with most distribution within 2-3 hours of Sydney or Mulgrave. However, when regular customers are doing work further afield, Marks says his team tends to deliver there.

For Marks, “We only do this for regular customers,” he says. “If it was for one-off sort of customers, who want us to travel to Port Macquarie or somewhere that’s five or six hours away, we’d probably knock it back.”

In terms of a company motto, Marks says one that sticks with him is: “If it’s fair for our customers, it’s fair for us. And we like to do things right the first time.”

BUILDING BIG IN INDUSTRY

Sparking on the National Construction Code changes, and the rise of greater pre-fabrication, Mark believes the significant changes going on in the industry will impact on businesses such as his. “I think the three-storey dwellings in timber construction will affect us. Our biggest concern is the design of those structures.”

If an employee is absent the day before or after a public holiday, do they lose the public holiday?

It is very common for people to believe that if an employee is absent on the working day either side of a public holiday, then the employee is not entitled to be paid for the public holiday. This used to be a clause in the Timber and Allied Industries Award 1999, but it became unenforceable in 2006, and is not a feature of the current Timber Industry Award.

If a full-time employee is absent on the working day either side of a public holiday, and they state that they were ill, then the employer’s policy on Personal/Carer’s Leave will apply. The policy can specify that employees must provide evidence to support an absence either side of a public holiday. The policy cannot specify that employees will lose pay for the public holiday if they don’t comply.

What if there’s a public holiday on a Saturday or Sunday?

Sometimes a public holiday will fall on a Saturday or a Sunday, for example Easter Saturday and Easter Sunday.

Public holiday entitlements for full-time employees normally say that employees are only entitled to payment for the holiday, and the day off work, if it’s a day on which they would normally have worked part of their 38 hours for the week. So employees who work their 38 hours Monday to Friday would have no entitlement to be paid for Easter Saturday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday. This is the case even taking into account they wouldn’t have worked those days anyway.

We usually work a short day on Friday, to make a 38 hour week – do we have to move the short day if Friday is a holiday?

This applies where employees work eight hours Monday to Thursday, and six hours on Friday, making a 38 hour week.

When is an employee paid for public holidays they wouldn’t have worked anyway?

You might have full-time employees who agree to work their 38 ordinary hours other than Monday to Friday. For example, you might have someone who works full time, Sunday to Thursday, or who works 38 hours, but only over Tuesday to Friday. If those employees are covered by the Timber Industry Award 2010, then there are special provisions for those full-time employees working non-standard hours.

In that case, if a public holiday falls on a day the employee would not otherwise have been working, they are entitled to an extra day of paid leave, a day added to annual leave, or an extra day of pay.

Let’s say you have someone who works 38 hours, Tuesday to Friday, and Easter is approaching. In most states and territories, the public holidays are Good Friday, Easter Saturday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday.

The employee is entitled to a day off with pay at the ordinary rate for Good Friday, because it is a day that the employee would otherwise have worked.

Additionally, the employee is entitled to three extra days of pay, or three days of paid leave, to compensate for Easter Saturday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday. This is the case even taking into account they wouldn’t have worked those days anyway.

Can we agree with employees to change the public holiday to another day?

Most awards, and the Timber Industry Award 2010 is no exception, allow an employer and employees to agree to substitute another day for a public holiday.

In fact, an employer can agree with a majority of employees in an enterprise, or a part of an enterprise, to substitute another day, and that will bind all affected employees.

An employer can also make this type of agreement with an individual employee, although in that case, the agreement would only affect that employee.

For example, an employer in Victoria might agree with a majority of employees to substitute the Monday before Melbourne Cup Day (which always falls on a Tuesday) for the Day Before AFL Grand Final Day. In that case, if a majority of employees agreed, the Day Before AFL Grand Final Day would be a normal work day, but there would be two paid days off on Melbourne Cup Day, resulting in a four day weekend at the start of November.

This article is general information only, and does not apply to sole traders and partnerships operating in Western Australia.

Emma Watt is an industrial relations consultant with almost 20 years’ experience in the timber industry.

Phone: 0411 708 073 | Email: emma@emmawatt.com.au
Get on board with Timber Flooring Week

July 2016 will see the flooring industry host a Wednesday to Saturday event that includes seminars, demonstrations and much more.

According to the Australian Timber Flooring Association’s Peter King, to-date exhibitions have failed to deliver for the timber flooring industry, and indeed he says are a concept many other industries are “walking away from”.

As a consequence, and to deliver a more high-impact, low cost alternative, the ATFA is organising Timber Flooring Week. The event is envisioned to consist of a number of small events organised by individual companies, all run over the same period of 20-23 July. Several slots in the program are already booked by companies (see the blank schedule below for suggested times), but the ATFA is still accepting two companies per slot to give members a choice of events.

The type of event a company puts on is of its own choosing and might be practical, hands-on demonstration seminars; mini-expos of their products and latest releases; private trade sales. There are also opportunities for companies to host social events at the conclusion of each working day, from Wednesday to Friday. Companies will use their own premises for each event.

The event is envisioned to consist of a number of small events organised by individual companies, all run over the same period of 20-23 July. “The event is envisioned to consist of a number of small events organised by individual companies, all run over the same period of 20-23 July. Several slots in the program are already booked by companies (see the blank schedule below for suggested times), but the ATFA is still accepting two companies per slot to give members a choice of events.

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The week culminates in the national awards dinner on the evening of 23 July. ATFA will promote the full program of events and participants can choose which events to attend depending upon their interests and business focus. Key facts on the event include:

- ATFA’s role is in planning of the overall event, scheduling and coordination, branding and promotion.
- Participating companies will also promote the week to their stakeholders using a unique ‘Timber Flooring Week’ logo.
- ATFA will fill the schedule in reverse order (Friday and Saturday likely to be most popular), on a first in best positioned basis. ATFA will also consider the geographic spread of events to ensure the logistics are viable for participants traveling between companies.
- There is no fee or charge to be involved in Timber Flooring Week. The only outlay is whatever companies choose to spend on their own events.

“The event is envisioned to consist of a number of small events organised by individual companies, all run over the same period of 20-23 July.”

ON BOARDS

Caught in the net

While other retail sectors are struggling to protect their market share from online sales, the timber flooring industry had seemingly escaped relatively unscathed – up until now. In the last year we became aware of a number of timber businesses who have dispensed with the showroom, choosing instead to operate from a website. While this strategy has worked for sellers of everything from food stuffs to fashion, I foresee some challenging times ahead for the timber flooring industry and its customers.

Approximately 70 per cent of all flooring consumers undertake some type of research into the products they are looking to purchase. In the past they have surfed the internet for inspiration, information and technical data before visiting a shop, but the tables are turning and consumers are visiting the shop to conduct their research before making their dollar conscious purchases online.

Point in case, an acquaintance in the retail sector provided a quote to supply and install a floating floor, then several months later the customer called the store for advice regarding some issues she was having with her flooring. On meeting the lady he realised he had quoted for the job and advised her to address her concerns to the point of purchase and or the contractor concerned. Nonetheless, the client called the store for advice regarding some issues she was having with her flooring. On meeting the lady he realised he had quoted for the job and advised her to address her concerns to the point of purchase and or the contractor concerned.

On the whole, flooring retailers to date have been slow to embrace internet sales. Those with websites use them primarily to showcase their products and promote their associated ancillary services. Perhaps this is with good reason, as the wider retail community is discovering that an internet presence does not guarantee the sales or profit margins necessary to sustain both the physical and virtual retail frameworks. Indeed it would seem that the essence of an internet business lies in paring back infrastructure while providing a wider range of products at a lower price. The logical conclusion being a restructuring of the lines of procurement, distribution and customer support; herein lies the true challenge to the timber flooring industry.

While retail outlets may seem to be the obvious victim in any price war, for the greatest loss to our industry would be the middlemen; wholesalers and on-sellers who provide hands-on education and support to retailers, contractors and consumers alike. The wholesalers provide the interface between production and the market place; they fulfil the role of product advocate through marketing, trade education events and problem solving/warranty issues. The anecdotal evidence suggests that in the future, without the support of the middlemen, getting product and installation issues addressed is likely to be a difficult and costly exercise. This raises questions around the enforcement of warranties and guarantees, despite the quality frameworks, such as chain of custody, manufacturing means, standards, codes of practise that provide the basis for measuring and determining the integrity and suitability of a product for sale. Product and installation issues are an inevitability, given timber’s natural characteristics and the intricacies and physical aspects of flooring installations – especially when weighed against consumer expectation. Most of the timber product being sold online is brought in from overseas where manufacturing standards are not always consistent with Australian standards, or have been purchased by the seller as a one-off. This is not a new practice – entrepreneurial individuals have been touting these wares for some time, however, the issue has been and continues to be a level of accountability regarding the servicing of the warranty.

Our own experiences tells us that online sellers enjoy a level of anonymity that makes it easy for them to sidestep their responsibilities to the customer, giving the term ‘buyer beware’ a whole new meaning. Consumer complaints and warranty claims...
Christine Flanagan is a stalwart of Australia’s frame and truss industry. After working overseas in occupational therapy, she returned home to focus on her family’s business – Calco Trusses and Timber. Here, Christine gives *TimberTrader News* her take on the industry, why she returned to her roots and what she hopes to achieve in her new role with the Frame & Truss Manufacturers Association of Australia.

**VICTORIAN BORN AND BRED**

I’m originally from Geelong, Victoria. After a number of years working overseas, and in Brisbane and in Melbourne, I returned to Geelong nearly 12 years ago.

**SAFETY FIRST**

I completed a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy at LaTrobe University, Melbourne, after finishing school. My qualifications enabled me to work overseas for several years before settling back in Melbourne in the occupational health and safety (OH&S) field. I worked my way into a management position and discovered a passion for business. This led me to my own family’s business – Calco Trusses and Timber. Over the years, I have played a number of roles at Calco. Now, I have settled into my current role as the business’s management co-ordinator.

**ATTRACTION TO THE ROLE**

The original focus of my role as management co-ordinator was to bring our entire management group together to ensure decisions were finalised and actioned in an effective way. I joined during a time when the focus was on improvement and growth within the business, and we didn’t want our overall progress stalled by the day-to-day running of the business. The role plays to my strengths and I still really enjoy it – which is lucky!

The ability of the internet to change the face of our industry may be daunting but it is inevitable. And while it may be challenging, we see new opportunities for flooring associations and the installers who have in the past relied on commercial projects, retail outlets, or even word of mouth to secure their work. Food for thought?

Right: Sharon and Ray say online sellers enjoy a level of anonymity that makes it easy for them to sidestep their responsibilities to the customer, giving the term ‘buyer beware’ a whole new meaning. © beccarra / Shutterstock

Who will shoulder the burden for retailer, installer and consumer education? Who will provide post-sales and problem solving support? Who will legislate administer and enforce consumer rights? While we take a minute to ponder who we might ask ourselves: who will lay our timber floors in the future and ‘how’ will we contact them?

are an enduring feature in the timber flooring landscape, a problem likely to be exacerbated by the autonomy and remoteness online sellers enjoy, and where governments globally are struggling to enforce national consumer law in a virtual economy.

One has to ask where this will leave us. Who will be responsible for the warranties?

Who will lay our timber floors in the future and ‘how’ will we contact them?

**“I joined during a time when the focus was on improvement and growth within the business, and we didn’t want our overall progress stalled by the day-to-day running of the business.”**

CHRISTINE FLANAGAN

The ability of the internet to change the face of our industry may be daunting but it is inevitable. And while it may be challenging, we see new opportunities for flooring associations and the installers who have in the past relied on commercial projects, retail outlets, or even word of mouth to secure their work. Food for thought?

While we take a minute to ponder, ‘who’ we might ask ourselves: who will lay our timber floors in the future and ‘how’ will we contact them?

Ray and Sharon Brice specialise in mediation training and project management. They have four decades experience in the flooring industry.

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Right: Sharon and Ray say online sellers enjoy a level of anonymity that makes it easy for them to sidestep their responsibilities to the customer, giving the term ‘buyer beware’ a whole new meaning. © beccarra / Shutterstock
“The best advice I ever received
To get in there, have a go, and to try something new every day.

ON JOINING THE FTMA BOARD
The Frame & Truss Manufacturers Association of Australia (FTMA) plays an important role in developing and sharing information relevant to all frame and truss businesses in the timber industry. As a company, we here at Calco made the decision to join the FTMA to better understand the opportunities and challenges that face our industry’s future. Personally, I joined the board to be part of the discussions.

WHAT’S AHEAD
I’m looking forward to seeing how the board operates, which will help me understand how I will be able to contribute in an effective way. I look forward to bringing my experiences within the Australian frame and truss industry to the board, and being part of an effort to strengthen our industry-wide.

ON THE NCC
The recent amendment to the National Construction Code (NCC) that allows timber to be used in building constructions of up to eight storeys represents a great opportunity for our industry. The environmental and cost benefits of using timber for these types of constructions have been proven in several countries around the world. The change to the NCC will open up opportunities for more innovative and flexible building designs in the future.

This change has opened the door for those of us who manufacture traditional building systems, and it represents a whole new venture for engineered cross laminated timber (CLT) products. I also believe the government’s recently renewed focus on grant support for innovation will provide an avenue for our industry to make the most of the new opportunities.

UP TO THE CHALLENGE
The timber industry faces ongoing threats from alternative materials: composite materials, steel prefabrication and so on. How we market our product as an industry continues to hold relevance – especially in regards to sustainability. Keeping pace with compliance and the best practices for general business in terms of OH&S, human resources, lean manufacturing, technology, and marketing, will continue to challenge our industry. Staff training – specifically when it comes to estimating and detailing positions – is an obstacle that the frame and truss industry faces in particular.

POSITIVE CHANGE
Over Calco’s 66-year history within the timber industry, we have continuously adapted to find a relevant position in the market. We started making trusses 45 years ago and, since then, have witnessed a lot of change. From green hardwood and detailing by hand – through to the computer generated pine trusses that fly off the roller press today. The best part about the industry is watching the improvements and how they transform the industry. Machinery innovation, improvements in business management, and the way in which timber is now marketed. We look forward to being a part of the positive changes and opportunities that continue to come out from the industry.

HOPE IN NEW OPPORTUNITIES
I hope that the industry, by embracing new opportunities across the board, will continuously improve and therefore go on to thrive. I hope our industry continues to positively promote the role that timber frames and trusses play within construction and protect profit margins for the long-term health of our businesses.

“The change to the NCC will open up opportunities for more innovative and flexible building designs in the future.”
CHRISTINE FLANAGAN

Christine Flanagan.
By David Schroder, Equipment Mechanical Engineer

Feeling the heat?

Breakdowns in machinery are a fact of life, and when a machine breaks down the pressure to get it back up and running can be immense and leave you feeling the heat. We all know that maintenance is the best way to reduce the number of breakdowns on machinery. If a machine is well lubricated, and small problems are identified and fixed quickly, then the chances of a major breakdown are reduced. This type of maintenance can be easily implemented on the mechanical parts of the machine but what about the electrical parts of the machine? Can these parts be maintained?

The simple answer is yes! It’s called thermographic testing.

Thermographic testing, or thermography, is a test method that can be used to detect bad electrical connections, unbalanced loads, deteriorated insulation, or other potential problems in energised electrical components. These problems may lead to excess power use, intermittent faults, damage to motors and equipment, catastrophic equipment failure or even a fire.

Thermographic testing is based upon the sensing of heat emitted from the surface of an object in the form of infrared radiation. An infrared camera can be used to detect and convert the infrared radiation into either a temperature value or a thermal image, which can be used to assess the thermal condition of the object.

To be technical, energised electrical systems generate heat because of electrical resistance. The amount of heat generated is related to the amount of current flowing through the system and the resistance of the individual components and connections within the system. As components deteriorate, their resistance increases, causing a localised increase in heat. Similarly, a bad electrical connection will have higher resistance than a good connection, along with a higher temperature profile. A thermographic test may be used to detect these temperature differences.

MiTek has made thermographic testing part of the regular maintenance schedule. On an annual basis a survey is conducted on all machines and electrical distribution boxes. This work is performed by a contractor who produces a report identifying any problem areas.

A recent survey identified the fault below. The first picture shows perfectly normal looking electrical components but under inspection by the thermal imaging camera, it’s a very different story. The second image highlighted a bad electrical connection which was heating up during operation.

While this doesn’t appear to be a big issue, it certainly might turn into one. Had this fault not been identified, this machine would likely have started to fault intermittently or breakdown altogether. Additionally, this simple fault may have caused mechanical damage. It may not be apparent during repairs that this damage was caused by a faulty electrical connection and the machine may have gone back into service without the root cause of the problem being fixed.

Thermography can test electronic components for damage or deterioration, and can test wiring for loose connections or damage.

Thermography identifies:

• Overloading or imbalance of electrical circuits
• Defective equipment such as contactors, overloads, switches, electric motors, etc.

The key benefits of testing are:

• Early detection of faults and breakdown prevention
• No service interruptions during inspection
• Lower repair costs
• Reduces risk of fires.

A thermographic survey is quick, easy, and relatively inexpensive, and might save a great deal of machine down time and expense. Get in touch with your local electrician and they should be able to point you to a contractor who specialises in this work. It’s well worth the effort and, if your electrical components are running cool, you won’t be feeling the heat! 

Visit mitek.com.au for all guidelines

It is a great feeling visiting members for one on one meetings, as I get to learn so much about their business and the issues they feel are facing the industry and affecting their everyday business. On top of that, the member gets to ask questions pertinent to their business and for advice on particular issues they are facing.

Recently I had the pleasure of catching up with Steven Page of Binders Building Supplies in Renmark, which is located in South Australia approximately three hours from Adelaide and seven hours from Melbourne.

Binders Building Supplies is a supplier of timber trusses, insulation, gyprock, Hardies building products, doors, imported timbers, pine, building and hardware supplies and deals directly with tradies.

It was great seeing an owner of a business who loves his work, and, like many fabricators, has long-term employees.

We all know that keeping good employees saves your business money as the costs incurred in turning over employees not only causes disruption to your production but costs your business. It has always surprised me how many companies in our industry have long-term employees.

"Training, recognition of skills, safe working environment and job security are plenty of other reasons why people stay in the same job for so long. If you are having a greater than average turnover of employees it might be worth looking at the reasons why, and perhaps looking at training, which FTMA Australia can assist with."
We’ve all heard the argument of ‘why train someone as they will simply leave?’, but what if the alternative is to hold on to an employee who is not productive and not trained? The costs to your business will be greater than any training costs. Last month I outlined the great training programs available, so if you are interested in training your employees, please let me know by calling me on 0418 226 242 or emailing me at kersten@ftmaustralia.com.au

FAREWELL & THANK YOU
FTMA Australia board member Peter Reilly has unfortunately tendered his resignation from our board as he retires from Dindas Australia. Peter has been on the board since 2008 and has been an outstanding board member, making great contributions to the board for the betterment of the Australian frame and truss industry.

Too often these days you see people working in a role because it’s a job and pays the mortgage; however, Peter is a person passionate about the forest and wood products industry and he absolutely loved his job, his industry and most of all the people in the industry.

Peter will be missed on the board and on behalf of past and present board members and the FTMA Australia membership we wish him all the best for his retirement.

KERSTEN GENTLE

Have you joined the online TimberTrader News community?

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I love the TV program Air Crash Investigation. The combination of human, natural and mechanical factors leads to all sorts of fascinating permutations that do down a plane. The problem with the program is that they spin out what would be a great half hour program to an hour. In order to squeeze a full hour out of a simple set of facts, they show a dramatic simulation and then more or less summarise what will happen. And then they tell you what they will tell you. Then they tell you again. Then after each ad break they summarise what they just told you. And then they tell you again. And then at the very end they summarise all the summaries. And then they replay the dramatic crash sequence just because they can.

So, in that vein I introduce to you the first episode of Building Crash Investigation (BCI). Unfortunately writing doesn’t give the dramatically serious thought that the voice over on Air Crash Investigation does. You will have to supply that yourself.

Here on Building Collapse Investigation we are going to come to understand how a simple problem of low roof pitch can lead to a looming induced building collapse. (I have told you what I am going to tell you.)

One of my several hats is that of a forensic structural engineer. The work can be intriguing. I get to see lots of buildings that go bad when others make mistakes. Learning from others’ mistakes is far more appealing than learning from your own. Through this work, I have seen buildings go wrong for reasons as diverse as industrial explosions, insect infestation, design faults, vehicles driven into the sides of buildings and cyclones. Rarely though, perhaps just once a year, do I see a building structure that has totally collapsed without warning.

Last year I had the privilege to investigate the cause of collapse of a massive steel-framed industrial building that was over a hectare in size. From first failure to the other end of the building hitting the ground took about ten seconds. (If on the TV I would show you the security video.) The only reason that some parts of it stayed put was that the roof came down on the internal pallet racking!

Before the ad break we learnt that building can go bad for lots of reasons. And quickly. (I have told you what I just told you.) What could be the cause of the collapse of such a large building, and what is its relevance to every day timber building structure?

There are several reasons why roofs are built with a low pitch. In the case of my large industrial building, it was simply to keep the overall ridge height of the very long span building down. At a more domestic scale, I have seen quite a number of these fairly simple skillion extensions or alfresco areas collapse. These roofs are often spanned off the fascia or wall. And so a low pitch is required to maintain head height under lower end of the roof slope.

Some ‘square’ roofing profiles, such as clip lock, allow roof pitches as low as one degree. At such a low slope, water will barely run off the roof even if the structure is constructed as theoretically envisaged by the roofing designers. But we all know that there is no such thing as perfect construction; walls are not flat, foundations are up and down and roofers get on the tups on a Friday. (Get the hint; I have reiterated that it’s about low roof pitch!)

Additionally, a rafter supporting one degree roof will, as part of its design, have a natural and accepted deflection. As it deflects at the centre the roof slope steepens at the upper end and flattens out at its lower edge. My calculations show that a rafter initially laid at one degree slope that sags with its acceptable design deflection will have a resultant roof pitch at the eaves gutter of only 0.4 degrees! And that’s not enough to allow the water to run off in a heavy rain storm.

Returning from the ad break to BCI, we have seen that at low roof pitches, small changes in the building can dramatically reduce the roof pitch so that water finds it hard to run off.

What happens next is scary; in heavy rain a little bit of water retained on the roof causes the rafter to deflect even more. The deflection reduces the slope further. This cycle repeats itself until a reverse slope may occur. More and more water collects on the roof until, under massive weight, the roof collapses. (Queue dramatic simulation.)

There are reasons other than beam deflection that will slow the flow water off the roof. Foundation movement, lifting the lower roof edge and hail blockages are just a few examples. In fact, it was a combination of low roof slope, overall building size, and hail blockage that did-in that large industrial building.

So, on this month’s episode of Building Collapse Investigation, we have learnt about the risk of low pitch roofs and ponding. If you are designing rafters or even trusses for very low pitches, I suggest you think the likelihood of ponding and act appropriately.

I can’t do it; no more. Despite my parody, I just can’t bring myself to tell you what I told you I just told you – which you learnt at the beginning anyway.

Stay tuned for next month’s episode. Guaranteed with no repetition! T
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