



TECHNICAL BULLETIN #15

Vital Knowledge for Letting a Contract for the Installation of Wood Floor Systems

Since the withdrawal of Licencing in NSW in 1999 there has been a significant increase in the number of Building Disputes involving the installation of Wood Floors.

As the National Wood Flooring Association of Australia is often engaged to prepare detailed Technical Reports, both on “**FLOOR FAILURES**” and on “**UNCONVENTIONAL**” methods of construction, the purpose of this document is to make abundantly clear to all, what experienced professionals regard to be, “**best trade practice**”, and what is regarded as “**unacceptable**” practice, as demonstrated by continual Floor Failures and Disputes.

We live in an age where everybody wants something “quick” and “cheap”, but when it comes to a quality wood floor, the adage that “**you get just what you paid for**”, has never been truer !

Consumers need to be aware, that there are many things that unscrupulous contractors can do to “cheat” a client, and most of these items will not be apparent at the initial time of hand over.

Among so many of the items that legal disputes have disclosed, are a list of the following items that have been drawn from those experiences:-

1. Quoted “**Select**” Grade but supplied as a substantially lesser grade, or as a **mix** of various **lesser** grades, as a means of the contractor reducing his costs.
2. To enable a contractor to offer a “cheaper” price to secure the job, by “dudding” the client in product quality.
3. Floors installed with water emulsified adhesives (**PVA**) rather than Waterproof Polyurethane Adhesives, can be a difference of \$10.00 - \$12.00 m², saving to the contractor).
4. Use of adhesive in “**a-little-dab-will-do**” fashion, rather than full trowel bed of adhesive, will save a contractor plenty, but might cost you, your entire floor !
5. Installation of wood floors without “**checking**” that the sub floor “**levels**” conform with the **minimum** requirements of the Building Code of Australia.

(Maximum deviation of 3mm anywhere under a 3 metre straightedge).

6. Installation of floors over **uneven sub floors** (with no provision for adjusting sub floor levels).
7. Installation of wood floors over sub floors **“unchecked”** for **Moisture Content**.
8. Installation of floors over **unventilated** or **poorly ventilated** sub floors, leading to floor failure.
9. Installation of acoustical floors using **non-approved** acoustical membranes.
10. Installation of acoustical floors with major sections of concrete sub floors **fully exposed** and **not covered** by the required acoustical membranes causing failure of Acoustical Test Results and legal removal of “unacceptable” flooring system.
11. Failure to provide sufficient perimeter expansion, particularly at transition to tiles / bathroom etc.,
12. Failure to provide adequate **internal** expansion within floor construction as required.
13. Use of polyurethane coatings leading to floors being torn-apart due to **“edge bonding** phenomenon.
14. Poor sanding and finishing practices that fail to cut the floor “flat” prior to finishing processes.
15. Installation of wood floors in areas **“below grade”** where **ineffective drainage / waterproofing** lead to wood floor failures.
16. Serious failures to **recognise** that all timber floors installed in **“High Humidity** areas must provide for **greater floor movement**, and contractors must know and fully comprehend the specific procedures that **must** be incorporated within such floor construction.

Substitution:

The practice of **Passing-off** of timber grown in South East Asia / Africa and other regions AS IF they are timber drawn from Australian Native Forests.

These timbers (even if of same botanical specie) do not exhibit the same characteristics, nor in many cases are they treated, for **Lyctid Borer etc**, as most of these species were originally planted for use as **wood pulp**, (not sawn lumber), and are therefore drawn, from **“unmanaged”** forests, with a significant **excess of knots**, as they are drawn from (young) **immature**, forests.