



TECHNICAL BULLETIN #17

WOOD FLOOR TRENDS IN AUSTRALIA

As one looks at the history of Wood Floors in Australia, it is quite fascinating to study the way marketing “trends” have influenced people’s decision making.

When Australia was first settled, every home that did not have an earthen floor, enjoyed the warmth and charm of an Australian Hardwood floor.

Australia is blessed with an extraordinary abundance of unique hardwood forests that were much attested to in the reports of all our early explore, and many might not realise that many exclusive hotels and residences right throughout Europe, boast an Australian Tallowood dance floor as one of its endearing features.

As a young man growing up in Australia, I always remember my mother and father looking forward to the day when they could afford to buy wall-to-wall carpets, because that is what was “fashionable”. Everybody strove to keep up with the “Jones” who just carpeted their home.

However, as the years have passed and as the experience of many, has been to experience “**heath issues**” associated with dust mites, asthma and allergies, the swing back to the cleanliness, warmth and charm of a hardwood floor has been massive. This trend has also been influenced by the trend of many European migrants who have come to Australia, who have long known the advantages of a quality wood floor.

As with all trades, there are always “bottom feeders” who continue in business because they are always the “cheapest” and someone is always available to be sucked-in to making a decision based upon **price** alone.

Never has the adage been more accurate than in today’s world, where, generally speaking, “**you get what you pay for**”, and “wisdom” should be applied in considering one’s options.

Over the past 20 years in Australia, there has been a dramatic change in the **surface coatings** and **finishing systems** with which wood floor systems are coated. Both with **site-finished** coatings and **pre-finished** coatings.

Driven by the demands of high-rise construction all over the world, **prefinished products** are now available with 7 and 8 coat finishes upon them, which essentially will last the life of a domestic residence, if they are looked after. (Without ever being resurfaced).

Even **commercially**, in very heavy traffic situations, we now see floors that have been in service for over **20 years**, and other than cleaning, have never been recoated or resurfaced.

Hence, why domestic clients are seeing that if they select a “quality” product, while they live in this home (with common-sense care) they will never need to think about having their floors re-surfaced.

What do we mean by “*common-sense*” ?

- bringing sand and grit into the home without appropriate provision to trap sand **outside**, does not constitute “common-sense”, as this will be just like sandpaper on your floors.

Today, many competent flooring companies provide their clients with an **electrostatic dust control mop**, which is used completely dry and represents approximately 97% of your maintenance requirements. However, sand and grit requires a vacuum cleaner.

The use of good quality floor protectors under furniture is also an intelligent provision.

Best floor protectors are generally made in either Sweden or Canada and allow your furniture to “glide” upon your beautiful timber floors.

In today’s busy world, people have more to do than vacuum carpets, and do housework. Living with wood is easy and might we say, a joy.

Many may not be aware of the outstanding **thermal** values associated with wood.

Think for one moment about the coldest countries in the world, Switzerland, Canada, etc., What is the most extensively used building material, why it is wood, because 25 mm of wood is equivalent **thermally**, to 150 mm of concrete.

As our older population ages, and we are sensitive to cold winters and aching joints, it is interesting to see just how many Italians and Greeks, who previously had installed stone or tile floors, are now covering those floors with wood.

The introduction of **Prefinished Acoustical Plank** Floors to the high-rise market worldwide, now makes available a very cost-effective method of being able to cover stone and tile floors with wood, without having to remove the tiles.

The style of **Acoustical Blanket** used on “**quality**” installations, is of the same nature as that used when people go camping in the bush, and place a **thermal blanket** under their sleeping bag.

Thus, when such systems are used in child-care centres etc., the children are not sitting with their bottoms on a cold concrete / tile floor, but are **thermally** insulated the same way that now all the ladies at the tills in David Jones, Myer etc., are. Where previously there have been serious problems with varicose veins etc., from standing around all day on cold / hard surfaces.

The range of wood floor products on the market today is extraordinary, but be “**warned**” not all products are “**quality**” products and you need to do your research. Just dealing with a big name retailer may not be sufficient, as many such people are just renting a few square metre of space to “johnny come-lately”.

There are people in the market place who “**specialise**” in wood floors, rather than being a carpet / vinyl / tile / timber-shutter “*catch all*” operator.

Look closely at the people you are accepting advice from, ask plenty of questions, don’t believe all that you are told and make sure that you place “**quality**” and “**integrity**” at the head of your shopping list.

The **figure, flare** and **beauty** of a quality hardwood timber floor is admired by all. The simplicity of maintenance and the extraordinary longevity of the coats that are available on “**quality**” products makes the selection of a quality timber floor an outstanding feature of any home.

Remember this, if you buy right, and you look after a “**quality**” wood floor, it will look just as good when you sell it, as it did the day you bought it.

Enjoy living with your beautiful Timber Floors !