



Outdoor Structures Australia

Practical solutions that enhance community design projects

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EXTERNAL TIMBER DESIGN NOTE **No. 1 March 2001 - SELF CLEANING DECKS**



Colin MacKenzie, Technical Director of TRADAC, has three requirements for a long lived timber structure –

- **Keep them dry**
- **Don't let the rain get to them**
- **Don't let them get wet!**

All three are hard to achieve with boardwalks so the compromise is to detail the structure so it dries as soon as possible. The picture above shows a boardwalk that breaks this rule. The problems are:

- The kerb is coach-screwed straight onto the deck. This can reduce the life of the structure as,
 - The deck is not self cleaning as any leaf litter is trapped on the deck. The build-up of moisture along the kerb can significantly reduce the life of the decking.
 - Moisture is trapped between the kerb and the deck. Note there is no gap between the boards under the kerb but a sizeable gap directly behind the kerb. Dry timber does not decay
- The decking has parallel sides with an arrised top. The gaps have filled with soil and will hold moisture.

For our recommendations on the detailing of kerbs see our [Boardwalks Design Guide](#) which deals with edge treatments on *page 10* and *11*, and the [Boardwalk Engineering Guide](#) which gives timber sizes on *page 6*. Ideally, the kerbs need to be about 50mm off the deck to be self cleaning.

For details on designing a self cleaning deck refer to our ***Boardwalks Design Guide page 16*** and our [Deckwood Selection Guide page 2](#). Our Deckwood profile has the major advantage of being pre-graded and non reversible. The image above shows decking that was thickened (dressed) on the back but, being reversible, has been laid with some dressed faces up (i. e. the side that is slippery and has poorer weathering ability). The defects that should have gone down now present a splinter hazard to the public and quickly deteriorate further.

Ted Stubbersfield, Director.

PLEASE CONTACT TED IF YOU REQUIRE FURTHER TECHNICAL INFORMATION ON EXTERNAL TIMBER STRUCTURES OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE - www.outdoorstructures.com.au