

OUTDOOR STRUCTURES

Outlasts and outperforms

May 2014 Newsletter

Written by Ted Stubbersfield

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Dear Reader

[Outdoor Structures Products now Produced by DeckMaster](#)

Chris Blackledge has been manufacturing my product range under the name of Infrastruction Pty Ltd since June 2012. The products will now be produced by [DeckMaster](#), situated in Ipswich, Queensland. Chris Blackledge and I have joined forces with Deckmaster. Chris will be in a primary sales role and myself retained to help with timber design consultation etc.

The same phone numbers have been retained and Chris and I will still be available to you. This will allow our Outdoor Structures product lines to be available to a greater audience through DeckMaster's nationwide network of Distributors.

[Advice on Deck Inspections \(Guest Contributor\)](#)



In last month's newsletter I commented on the latest Archicentre press release about the number of life-threatening decks in the country which had increased from approx. 8,000 ten years ago to approx. 12,000 now. I asked whether the number of decks has increased by 50% or have standards dropped even further.

When speaking with Ian Agnew of the Brisbane office of Archicentre, he advised that the situation with decks is so serious that they are advocating regular inspections similar to those required for pool fencing. I wholeheartedly agree. Archicentre have kindly contributed the following article on how to inspect decks. Note that this is not just a timber problem but relates to all decks regardless of material. - over to Archicentre.

"Balcony or deck collapses during recent years caused by bad building practice or poor maintenance have caused serious injury and in some cases resulted in tragic deaths.

Elevated balconies and decks – whether constructed of timber, steel or concrete – are exposed to the extremes of climate and need to be periodically checked for deterioration because of the risk they can pose for residents and visitors. Homeowners and tenants should check their deck annually for rotting timbers, shaky hand rails, loose balustrades, corroded fittings, rust stains or cracking and seek professional advice if necessary.

The following information is not meant to replace a professional assessment by a qualified person such as an architect or engineer, but it does provide an indication of what to beware of:

Timber Decks

- Identify the species of timber and make sure it is suitable for external use. Oregon, for example, may not be appropriate for external structures. It is distinguishable by a broad softwood grain pattern and by a pinkish colour when fresh surfaces are exposed, for instance where timber has split.
- Check for any compression or deformation of the structural members.
- Test the timber by probing it with a sharp object like a screwdriver. Decayed timber will feel soft and spongy.
- Check connection points at the beams with a screwdriver for deterioration as timber can rot at junctions.
- Make sure the timber balcony is properly fixed to the main house structure, for instance, using bolts or where timber framing extends into the house structure.
- Check the base of timber posts for rot and check brackets and bolts for signs of rust.
- Posts need to be securely anchored into the ground and not just bolted into paving.
- Check handrails and balustrades to make sure they are not rotted or unstable.

Concrete Balconies

- Look for signs of deflection. If the balcony slopes away noticeably away from the building, there may be a problem.
- Examine the underside of the concrete balcony. Rust stains or exposed steel reinforcement are signs of a serious problem.
- Check handrails and balustrades to make sure they are not loose or unstable.
- The presence of spalling, where chunks of concrete are crumbling off, may be a serious problem and indicates the need for inspection by an expert immediately.

If you're unsure, get some advice from an independent professional and restrict the use of the deck or balcony until you can be sure it's safe."

Decay caused by incorrect surface application

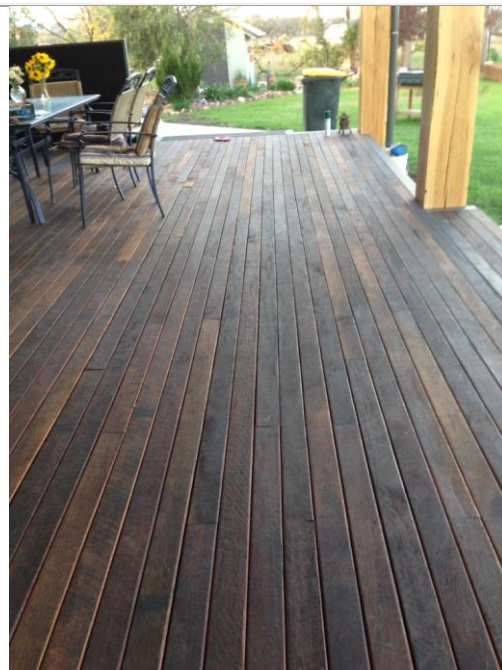


LifePlus, our domestic decking is a very trouble free decking system. Follow the guide (after you have purchased it for only \$22), don't deviate and it will reward you with a deck that will age gracefully. **LifePlus** is made primarily from spotted gum but even spotted gum is not immune from early decay when you do the wrong thing. This dressed face spotted gum domestic decking illustrated is only three years old yet it has decayed. The reason here is that it has received several coats of a film forming finish all round and the timber cannot breath and the trapped moisture has allowed it to decay. The owner

should have applied a high quality penetrating oil such as our **Tanacoat**. The decay at the end grain is compounded by the builder cutting the end of the decking square instead of back bevelling to ensure that moisture is not trapped.

The other reason you would not use a film finish is because it is simply too slippery when wet.

[LifePlus Project in Armidale](#)



Builder: Dan Murray, Red Constructions, Tamworth NSW 0401 387 240

A recent very happy customer in Armidale sent me these images of a deck on his own home that he built with our patented LifePlus. Because LifePlus is used on private residential work I do not get the same opportunity to take images so I was very grateful. When I developed LifePlus it was intended for fully weather exposed applications but it works even better under a roof.

This decking is fastened from underneath to a rail attached to the joist. It is a very neat finish. the decking is coated with Tanacoat. When specifying LifePlus you should use the words **LifePlus Decking installed in accordance with the LifePlus Decking Guide**. That way is someone puts it down with a nailing gun you have the right to demand that it be ripped up and start again.

Let the Buyer Beware



This week I had two distressed pensioners come to my office. They had purchased 160 m of decking at an online auction site and, on taking it home considered it unusable. They could not afford to take the financial loss they thought was involved. Over half of the 160 m were short at approx. 1.2 m long and they thought also of poor quality. Much of the balance in longer material they also thought was unusable too. It was purchased as "feature grade decking". They were right.

The Australian Standard grade descriptions for decking allow select, medium feature and high feature. While I don't think the last two should ever be used for decking they are defined standards and conformance to grade is easy to assess. On inspection, a large portion of the batch did not meet the very generous allowance of high feature grade. The Auctioneers told the pensioners 'tough luck" but changed their tune after a visit to consumer affairs and an offer of a certificate from me of non compliance to the advertised description. The manufacturer was trying to pass of firewood as decking.

The lesson: Be very careful when purchasing decking at an auction and steer clear if it is described as feature grade. If the price seems too good to be true it probably is.

Blog being written for Timber+DESIGN Magazine

My second blog written for Timber+DESIGN web magazine is on whether to use H3 or H5 treatment for boardwalks and the misuse of the term "Royal Species". It will show you how important it is not to rely on preservation for durability when dealing with sawn timbers. Timber+DESIGN is a very useful magazine for those interested in timber that has been used imaginatively.

[Click here for a link to the website of Timber+DESIGN magazine.](#)

[This months blog on H4 and H5 treatment](#)

[Click here to go straight to last months blog on whether to use stainless or galvanised fasteners](#)

To be on the mailing list, contact Kay Phillips [through this link](#).

Next month's blog will be whether 'plastic composites - really a timber substitute?

Bridge Quote Requests

If there is any doubt that OSA make the best kit bridges in the country look at the [Berrinba Wetlands Project](#) . Not all bridges are equal. After encountering three bridges in one month that did not meet the Bridge Code I wrote the [May 2012 newsletter](#). Refer to it when assessing the suitability of quotes.

[Steel bridge Quotation Request Form](#)

[Timber Bridge Quotation Request Form](#)

More information:

If you have timber road/rail/heritage bridge issues,

we suggest you talk to:

Mr. Dan Tingley

Senior Engineer

Wood Research and Development

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Corvallis OR 97333

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