

# Ted's News

## September 2017

### [Be Careful With Ply Fences](#)

#### [Wood Encouragement Policy - What is needed](#)

#### [Cairns Regional Council sets the Standard for Preservation](#)

### [Be Careful with Ply Fencing](#)



When I was writing my book on timber fences, I asked the ply guru at Carter Holt Harvey (CHH) about their recommendations for the use of *Shadowclad* in fencing. There has certainly been plenty used for that application. I was told that they did not recommend that product for fencing! I saw the above ply fence recently which was not faring too well. It is branded CHH *Shadowclad* but to be fair to CHH its application does not bear even lip service to their technical guides, so the issue is not with the product. When used in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations it performs well.

While I am not saying, "Don't build a ply fence" I am saying, "Proceed with caution and obtain written guidelines from the manufacturer on how to use their product in that application." And when the builder substitutes make sure you get an updated guideline. Oh, and notice the dark stain, that does the ply no favours. Only use light pastel shades. I give some guidance in the use of ply in fences in my book. [Have you purchased a copy yet or are you trusting the lowest price contractor to continually bring in high standards using material with no specification?](#)

Unfortunately, I do not have a close up image of a good ply fence. I am sure they exist.

### [Wood Encouragement Policy. What is needed](#)



Image Courtesy Dr Dan Tingley, Wood Research and Development

Last month I wrote an article, [A Wood Encouragement Policy, A Mixed Blessing](#). In it I argued that there is no point specifying timber if you are going to use it badly as it will be counterproductive in the long run. Eileen Newbury, National Marketing and Communications Manager for Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA) set me the challenge. It is easy to identify the problems but could I also identify some of the solutions. So here are my thoughts:

**Appropriate standards.** The requirements for a piece of timber that will work appropriately in a roof truss are very different to those for decking and are different again for a bollard and even for a boardwalk joist. So many designers can't see past numbers such as F14 or F17 and fail to

understand that while it is critical for roof trusses it is virtually meaningless for external timber where durability becomes more important than strength. Fortunately, I developed these and can help you with them.

**Design Checklists.** Inexperienced designers etc. need to be able to quickly tap into the wisdom of the ages. The understanding of why the areas highlighted in a checklist are important will come in time. It is the same mistakes being repeated time and time again. My books *Timber Footbridges* and *Deck and Boardwalk Design Essentials* give checklists to assess your design or a tender you have received. I doubt if they have been looked at seriously by other than a handful of people. They could save you so much grief.

**Educate yourself.** Now there is no excuse for ignorance. FWPA run an excellent resource, the [Wood Solutions Campus](#) where you can learn what you need on different subjects at starter, intermediate and advanced level. For design professionals who need more knowledge there is the [Graduate Certificate in Timber \(GradCert Timber\) run by the University of Tasmania](#).

**Scrap self regulation of suppliers.** I remember a time when under the Queensland Hardwood Quality Control scheme our grading was verified four times a year and likewise our timber preservation was also inspected four times a year. Branded timber actually meant something. That is all gone and with it the integrity of certificates supplied by some suppliers. One industry leader told me that grading back then was "bad" as the timber being supplied was too good!

**Only deal with trained/experienced suppliers.** When you go to a big box for your advice the danger is the salesman was selling ladies shoes the week before and has that most dangerous of things, a little knowledge. [See Jack's Rant in the May Newsletter](#).

**Don't choose your consultants on price.** You need to ensure that your consultant has the necessary expertise in timber, or at least can tap into that expertise. My own observation is that the external use of timber can be more of an art than a science but it is not a dark art. It is all very logical.

**Independently verify.** What is so perverse about timber that you do not independently verify that the timber being supplied is what has been asked for. You do it with concrete!! One grader from NSW told me that he regularly rejects between 30-50% of timber presented for grading. I rejected 50% on a recent job. Some projects also require independent confirmation of treatment (see the next article). I can't stress how important independent verification is. Verification of treatment is more an issue with pine and verification of grading is the big issue with hardwood.

**Make use of me.** I have tried to put down in writing what I have learnt over a lifetime. The guides I have written are very practical. Avail yourself of my CPD sessions, get me to check drawings, get me to check construction, get me to check grading. [See the City of Gold Coast deck in the July newsletter.](#)

### [Cairns Regional Council Sets the Standard for Preservation](#)



**A boardwalk at Cairns Botanical Gardens using Deckwood that is performing well.**

The decision by the Cairns Regional Council to require independent verification of successful preservation of the timber for an important project was presented at a recent treatment workshop as the direction for the future. The seminar run by the newly created *National Centre for Timber Design Life and Durability* was entitled *Quality Control and Assurance for Wood Preservation: The Nordic and North American Schemes Quality control and assurance (QC/QA) schemes*. These are mature schemes that have been developed to ensure that treated wood products are fit for purpose. We certainly can learn from the Nordic and North American experiences and build a first class QC/QA scheme that will give retailers and consumers great confidence in the performance of treated wood. Sadly industry participation at the workshop was poor. [See July's newsletter to understand why it is needed](#)

The Centre is a strategic initiative of the industry group Forest & Wood Products Australia (FWPA), and is a partnership between industry, academia and government. and is based at the University of the Sunshine Coast. The Centre will initially focus its efforts on the development of evidence-based data, systems and tools to underpin consumer confidence in the performance of timber products. Over time, the Centre would also create world-leading predictive models to enable architects and building specifiers to more easily choose the appropriate timber products for specific end uses and tasks.

One of the key objectives of the Centre, headed up by Professor Philip Evans, is to train talented young people in the field because too many of us that promote timber are getting old. The Centre will have access to some of the brightest minds in the best universities in Australia and around the world.

Unfortunately it is very early in the organisations life and the website is not up and running yet. I will send the link through when I have it

### Two New CPD Subjects Being Developed

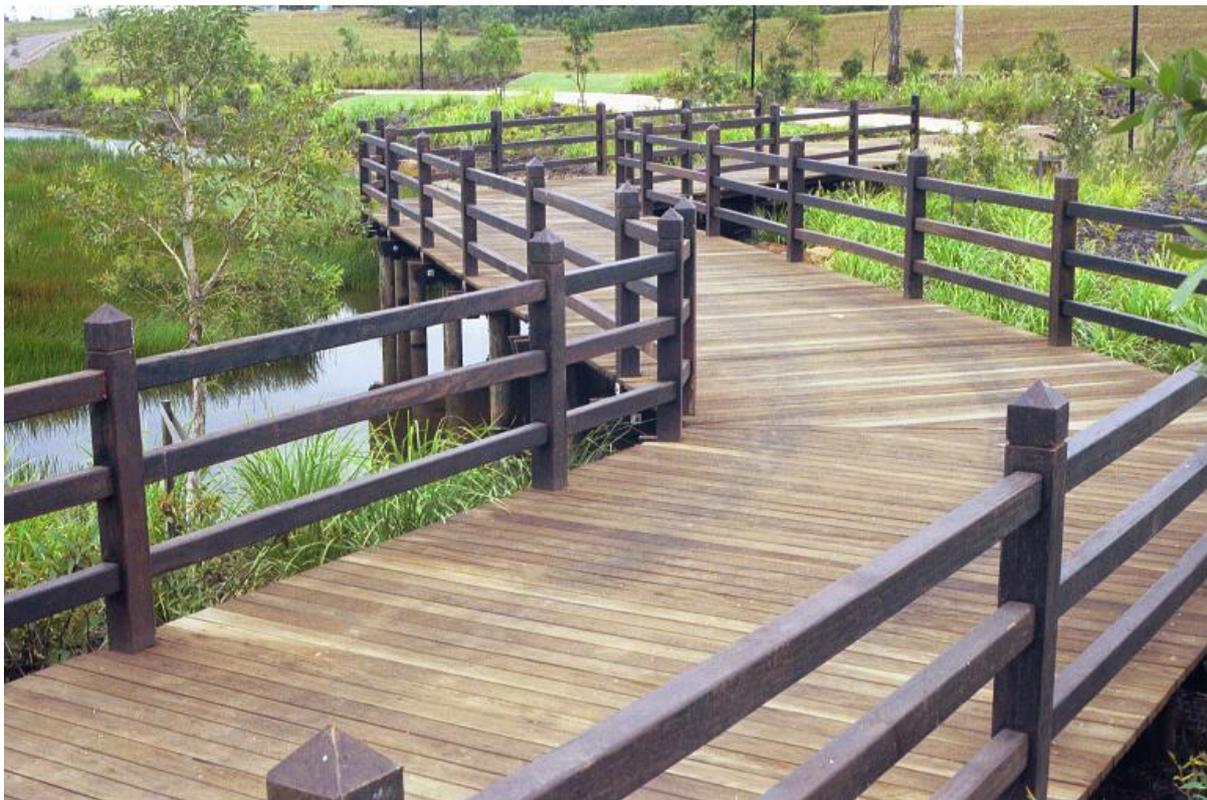


Image Dennis Clark Photography

I am working on two new CPD subjects, Timber 101 and Boardwalk Design. I gave them a dry run for a class of landscape architecture students at QUT recently. A bit more work is needed but they can be finalised very quickly if you would like to have a presentation at your office.



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