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## **'Blue Pine' framing: you'd be mad not to use it**

Allan Mackay, who owns and operates a successful building firm in the Newcastle suburb of Blackhill, has been a fan of 'Blue Pine' termite protected plantation pine framing since it first became available in prototype form, over two years ago.

To label him a 'Blue Pine' framing enthusiast would be something of an understatement.

When challenged, Allan could not think of a reason for not using 'Blue Pine' framing. Indeed, his opinion on the product, which boasts guaranteed protection against termite attack for 25 years is best summed up by his comment, "You'd have to be mad not to use it."

Allan MacKay freely admits he's been a 'chippy' all his thirty year working life. However, while he remains no slouch with a hammer, chisel and saw, most of his time is now spent managing and administering his growing business, looking after clients and chasing new ones.

A&K MacKay Building Company employs a full time staff of six tradesmen and two office assistants and provides upwards of ten months a year work for a growing legion of hand picked subcontractors. The company mainly concentrates on residential project development, although it is also involved in commercial building and one-off home construction in and around the fast developing Hunter Valley, 100km north of Sydney.

Being able to guarantee his company's high standards of workmanship and end-product presentation is something Allan takes very seriously.

"It is important that customers not only appreciate and feel good about the immediate feel and finish of my work but that they also have real peace of mind when they sign the cheque," Allan said.

A perennial concern for new home buyers, especially in newly developed areas on what was once native bushland, is the threat of termite attack. Of course, modern building standards require contractors to implement and document strategic measures to "prevent the undetected entry" of termites. But even with these measures in place, many fear that termites can still get in and potentially attack both superficial timberwork (such as

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furniture and fittings ... even in steel framed houses) and, more seriously, structural (framing) timber, especially in high termite risk areas.

'Blue Pine' plantation pine framing is treated with environmentally friendly, long lasting synthetic pyrethroids and is guaranteed to provide protection against termite attack for 25 years.

For Allan MacKay and his customers, Blue Pine framing has been both welcome and overdue.

In his efforts to provide long term certainty and security for his customers, Allan has tried and tested a wide range of termite barriers. However, he has never been totally happy that they can live up to their claims.

Allan expressed great enthusiasm about "making doubly sure" and "going the extra mile" in all his work to guarantee long term security for his customers and also to provide an added measure of protection for him and his business.

And, it is this enthusiasm for security and assured quality which helps explain his enthusiasm for Blue Pine framing.

"I first learnt about Blue Pine framing reading a building magazine and immediately got onto the guys at Hunter Frame & Truss to find out more for me," Allan said.

"Geoff Nixon, from Hunter Frame & Truss came back with the news that we could give our customers a written guarantee against termite attack on the Blue Pine frames for 25 years ... a far better guarantee than they will get anywhere else," he said.

"I now use this guarantee as a sales point and, when I sit down with owners, I always highlight the section in my quote which states, 'All timber frames: Blue Pine with a written 25 year guarantee'."

Allan said the original owner of the Warner's Bay retirement village project originally specified it to be constructed using 'steel frames'.

"After he purchased it at auction in June last year, the new owner approached me and gave me the specs. That's when I told him, 'This is what I do. I use Blue Pine timber'," Allan said.

"When I discussed it with him in more detail, he seemed quite comfortable and gave me the go-ahead to proceed," he said.

Of course, Allan's preference for timber is also based on his familiarity with a great natural product.



“In a nutshell, I am a carpenter, not a steel worker. I don’t think there are any advantages in steel. I have done some homes using steel frames, when I have been pushed.

“But I have found all the fixings are dearer. And it is harder and slower to put your fixings in. Even using battery powered screw drivers, fixing Gyprock to timber is a lot quicker and easier than drilling through steel.

“And electricians have to put grommets into every stud, so there is another time consuming and cost consuming element.

“I just don’t find there is any advantage. I really don’t,” he said.

Allan is also part way through building what he describes as a ‘more up-market’ complex at nearby Adamstown, just south of Newcastle city

The complex, partly built into a north facing hill, comprises four duplex and two stand alone units.

“That’s another thing I like about the termite-protected frames,” Allan said.

“When we are building into the sides of hills, there are situations where we really cannot get down to do a full Part B perimeter treatment.

“Blue Pine framing gives us added comfort under those circumstances,” he said.

And, how does he know the Blue Pine treatment actually works? He and one of his supervisors, John Olive have seen it with their own eyes.

And it is John who gets the last word. “A little while back, we had some Blue Pine off cuts laying on the ground besides a hardwood brick pallet. At the end of the job, when we went to clean up, we found that, while termites had pretty well eaten out the pallet, not one had not touched the Blue Pine.”

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### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

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## **PLANTATION PINE FRAMING CAMPAIGN**

Formed in early 2003, the Plantation Pine Framing Campaign represents some of Australia’s largest producers, processors and merchants of plantation pine products for use in building. The PPFC seeks to promote the competitive advantages of plantation pine as a building material to building professionals (builders, architects, engineers, building designers, specifiers etc.) and homeowners.

Financial contributors to the PPFC include:

Processors/distributors: Weyerhaeuser/Pine Solutions Australia, Carter Holt Harvey Woodlogic division, Hyne Timber, Boral/Highland, Frenchpine, Wespine, AKD



Forestry: State Forests of NSW, Forestry SA

Timber treatment chemical suppliers: Koppers Arch, Osmose

Frame and truss suppliers: Pryda, Mitek

Affiliated associations: Timber Development Association (NSW), TDA (SA), Timber Merchants Association, A3P.

A key focus for the PPFC is highlighting the unique advantages of plantation pine as a material for constructing frames for new homes. These advantages are (a) environmentally-friendly (b) ease-of-use and (c) cost-effectiveness.

Australia's house framing market is estimated to be worth \$660 million, with timber frames now accounting for more than 90% of new house frames.

