

Timber - the climate friendly building material!



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TimberTALK is TABMA's newsletter and is published six times a year.

TABMA is a member-based organisation representing building materials suppliers, timber merchants, timber importers and related service providers. TABMA provides companies with practical solutions to improve business management, growth and profitability.

Credit bureau helps members do business better

Commercial Services Manager, John Theoharris, joined TABMA in 1984. He has occupied a number of positions since then and today acts as the Company Secretary for the TABMA group of companies, is also responsible for TABMA's credit bureau, Building Trade Credit (BTC) as well as participating in the general management of TABMA and the oversight of special projects, such as the recent review and update of the standard timber profiles booklet.

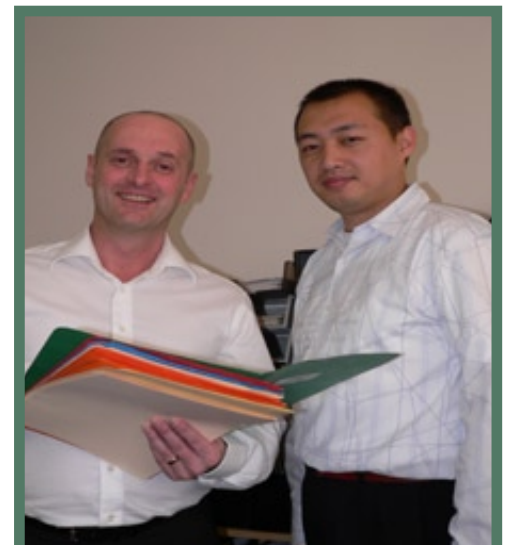
John says BTC has been in business since 1984 offering valuable information to suppliers of goods and services on credit to the building industry. "BTC has over 100 participating members; some are TABMA members while others include hire companies, brick suppliers, plasterboard groups, steel manufacturers, building material suppliers and concrete companies."

He points to the benefits to TABMA members of participation in BTC. "Membership allows companies to get a good 'feel' for who they are or contemplating doing business with, and how much exposure particular customers or prospective customers have. That is, how much money they owe to other creditors and how 'old' that money is."

"BTC helps members make better decisions about who they will open up an account for and the sort of credit terms they might offer."

John says BTC is a very worthwhile credit intelligence facility for TABMA members. "All the information required by BTC members is available online. The BTC data base is kept up-to-date with entries obtained from monthly debtors aged trail balance reports, and has more than 10,000 business entities included, equivalent to about \$3.5 billion worth of annual sales. So as a credit bureau, it provides extensive information to members."

John says TABMA members who participate in BTC have the benefit of improved commercial intelligence that allows them to better manage their accounting functions, especially their credit arrangements.



Commercial Services Manager, John Theoharris and Accountant, Rui Yu - collaborators in TABMA's commercial and accounting functions.



Predictive modelling guide takes uncertainty out of timber use

An estimated \$3.7 billion worth of timber is used in construction in Australia each year and the new Timber Service-Life Design Guide is expected to improve performance and safety, and reduce long term costs by assisting the most appropriate timber selection.

The guide and related education software and timber design procedures are the result of a 10 year, multi-million-dollar collaboration between scientists at CSIRO, state forestry agencies and the timber industry. The timber durability design project was conceived in 1996 and led by internationally recognised CSIRO building engineer Dr Robert Leicester, with funding from CSIRO, industry and Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA).

Dr Leicester said the design guide takes the uncertainty out of using timber by applying structural engineering criteria and predictive modelling to assess how long different timbers will last in a wide range of conditions. "The effective service life of timber can range anything from one year to more than 100 years, depending on the conditions it encounters.

"There is a wide natural variation between different timber species, the effectiveness of timber treatments and climatic conditions. What will perform for 50 years in Alice Springs may not necessarily perform that well in Queensland's Airlie Beach," said Dr Leicester.

"Our work has the potential to cut costs on construction projects by choosing the right materials and treatments for the conditions. It can help preserve timber in-use by indicating the best maintenance regimes and what can be done to reduce the risks of decay and pest attack. It also has the potential to provide planners with estimates of replacement times for various infrastructure components."

The research has rated 80 timber-species used in Australia into durability categories for each of five key hazards, and also developed geographic risk zones. Dr Leicester said the five key hazards considered likely to reduce the service-life of timber were in-ground decay fungi, above-ground decay fungi marine borers, subterranean termites and corrosion of fastener systems.

The guide integrated and synthesized the results of trial work undertaken over the past 30 to 40 years and is available from the FWPA website (www.fwpa.com.au).

Cranking up TABMA

In the five months he has been with TABMA, chief executive Colin Fitzpatrick has visited about three-quarters of members in NSW; been to Western Australia to meet the Board there and attended a Board meeting in Queensland.

Colin has appointed Michael Crichton to the role of Executive Officer TABMA WA. One of his priorities will be to get group training up and running, along with recruitment and the placement of trainees and apprentices.

Colin has announced that a major initiative in NSW has been the appointment of Scott Stanford as membership manager. "Scott started with us on the 2nd of June and his role is to call on all members throughout NSW on a regular basis."

"We are addressing the issue of communication or lack of it in the past, now members will be inundated with appearances from TABMA!"

Colin said that in meeting with members he had found it surprising that they are

not fully aware of the services TABMA offers. "So in the future we will be making every endeavour to get full information on our services to members. We will be talking group training and recruitment, technical advice that is available through TDA and a range of other professional services, including business software, insurance and fuel savings.

"There are a lot of deals and membership services that are available that members haven't always been aware of and part of my reason for visiting members has been to let them know what we can do for

them. Now with Scott Stanford on-board we will be much more proactive than we have been in the past."

Colin added that an important service that TABMA was

looking to build up is our recruitment division. "It is our goal to become the recruitment centre for the timber industry, where we can provide a recruitment service placing anyone from a sweeper to a sales manager."

"All members need to do is contact our Training Manager Werner Robb. We will do the advertising, initial interviewing and

In the future we will be making every endeavour to get full information on our services to members.

All systems go in Queensland

It's all systems go with the sunny Queensland TABMA crew. Karen Johnston says that as the new Executive Officer, she has placed priority on "meeting and greeting" members and gaining some feedback about services and what TABMA can do to further help meet industry demands.

"Alicia Oelkerf our Employment Consultant is being kept busy finding and placing various trainees and apprentices in timber merchandising, office administration, timber manufacturing, warehousing and distribution to name a few. She has also been busy promoting the Floor Covering Apprenticeship program that we recently received Government Funding to initiate."

"Members have identified a huge need for training so we're organising a time management training course, with other training such as sales, customer service and visual grading later in the year."

On 30 August TABMA Queensland will be hosting the 2008 Queensland Timber Industry Awards at the Sofitel Hotel in Brisbane. This gala function occurs every two years and is the only event of its kind that recognizes those who excel in the industry. Karen says with 400 people from the timber industry in attendance, the event offers a fantastic sponsorship opportunity for those wishing to show their support for the industry. If you would like further information about this event, please contact Karen on (07)3847 4637 or Karen@tabma.com.au

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Arch Wood Protection - keeping Kidsafe

The popular Kidsafe Fact Sheet dealing with timber treatments has been reviewed and updated with assistance from TABMA member Arch Wood Protection. Because it is commonly used for constructing play and recreational spaces, knowing about treated timber types is critical for those involved with kid's playground management.

According to Playground Advisory Unit's, Beverley Boland, Kidsafe receives many enquiries about the use of treated timber, both by phone and via their website. "Getting the facts straight regarding treatment types, especially in relation to children's play is an important part of our work."

With restrictions on the use of CCA treated timber for some types of treatments, Arch Wood Protection has been assisting Kidsafe to review and update its popular treated timber Fact Sheet. Senior executive Peter Carruthers said Arch Wood Protection recognised that, as a great Australian children's safety institution, people turn to Kidsafe to get the 'facts' on treated timber.

"Recognising that kids often get up close and personal with play equipment and timber products, it is important for those having responsibility for kids at play to know about treated timber types. In this regard the Kidsafe treated timber Fact Sheet is an important first port-of-call."



send the prospective employer 2-3 people and they can make the final selection.

Colin also advised that, from this year, the Board had decided that the TABMA awards in NSW would become a biennial event. "So there will be no awards dinner this year, but there will be an end-of-year gala dinner. The planning for this event is already underway. Information will be going out to members as soon as the venue, date and other details are finalised."

TABMA would also be organizing a bus tour for members to visit importers this year. "We have already spoken to a number of importers who are willing to host the tour and we will be advising members of the arrangements when the planning is completed," Mr Fitzpatrick concluded.



Moving TABMA up a gear. Colin Fitzpatrick (right) meets with membership manager Scott Stanford (centre) and Training Manager Werner Rob.



David Jones from Sydney office and Alicia Oelkers our Employment Consultant at the Benowa High School Careers Expo.



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John Walker, Managing Director, Belmont Timber passing on some tips to frame fabricators Jason Uren (left) and Dean Stickers

From concentration camp survivor to timber industry legend

Emerging from three-and-a-half years in Europe's concentration camps John Walker, with his new wife arrived in Australia with little going for him. He could barely speak English and had no work. However, he had a fierce determination to rise above the odds. Today he is hailed as a great living legend in an industry that he has served for 57 years.

With a partner he took over a little case workshop in 1951. It was in Belmont Street Alexandra. "That's where the name Belmont Timber comes from," says John.

"We were really knocking together timber crates for packaging before modern packaging came along. Wooden crates for beer bottles became a big item for us. We got the timber for our crates from a couple of sawmills on the Central Coast."

John says their first lucky break came when a sawmiller suggested they have a go at selling some timber. "So he cut some and we had a crack at selling it."

"We didn't really have a clue, but we put an advertisement in the local paper and next Saturday there was a queue of people waiting to buy it. We quickly realised that we have got onto a good thing, so we forgot about the cases and started to sell timber," remembers John.

So that was the start of Belmont Timber. Originally the timber sold North Coast hardwood for fencing and flooring use. "Then one day we got another lucky break," says John. "Someone walked in who had a contract for ten houses for the Housing Commission and asked us if we could supply the timber. We eventually became the major supplier for the Housing Commission

in the whole of New South Wales."

Belmont Timber started 'ready-cutting' for the Commission. "That really got us ahead of others. For many years ready-cutting was based on hardwood timber but gradually shifted to softwoods, particularly radiata pine. Today our predominant business is fabricating frames and trusses."

Now 85, John has been an active member of TABMA for decades. He served as its President from 1995 to 1997 and is still a member of the TABMA Board.

He has also been a member of Housing Industry Association since 1965 and was made a Life Member in 1984. John was awarded an Order of Australia (OAM) for services to the timber and building industries in 1996.

John says adaptation is part of the receipt of Belmont Timber's success. "Keeping pace with trends and changes where possible and even get a little bit ahead and not being afraid to change emphasis if the market is changing."

He confirms that the timber trade has been a tough business recently. "No doubt about it. I agree with most forecasters that there is unlikely to be much improvement in 08-09. However, along with others, I believe there will be substantial improvement in 09-10."

So according to John, the message for others in the timber trade is to hang on and wait. "If you can withstand the pressure – hang on!"

John's other great passion is ocean racing which he took up at 60. With his crew in his 27-year-old yacht Impeccable, he has done the Sydney-Hobart 24 times.

Reminder

TABMA bus tour of Sydney wholesalers scheduled for late July. More information to follow

End-of-year gala industry dinner planned - more information to follow.



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