

Ted's News

May 2021

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Hidden away at the bottom of each month's newsletter is [information about the consultancy services I provide](#). I fear most don't read down that far or think they can simply trust the person with the lowest price to do the right thing, I say in my CPD sessions, "only trust your mother." These two pieces of timber are from handrail with a significant drop on the other side. They meet no structural grade so they are dangerous. I recently assisted an organisation as they rewrote their timber specifications to ensure that contractors at least ordered the material that was fit for purpose. As for receiving it, you still need independent grade certification. What is tragic is that there are reputable suppliers whose material does not need to be checked but how do you know who they are?

Quicker Delivery of My Printed Guides in Australia

All hard copies of my guides are supplied through Amazon which printed them on demand in the USA. As of May 19, orders placed on Amazon Australia will be printed in Australia. This will result in quicker delivery and for prime members this should be as little as two days! Their print on demand service has only been for paperbacks but now they are introducing hardcopies. I plan to publish [*Timber in Playgrounds*](#) as Kindle, paperback and hardback. [Here is the link to order paperbacks](#)

A number of you took advantage of free copies of my commentary on the Old Testament book of Ruth. You may be interested to know that I have a publisher in the USA and it will be re-released later in the year. It is temporarily unavailable available through Amazon.

Queenslanders, the Smart House for the Smart State

Not a paid advertisement

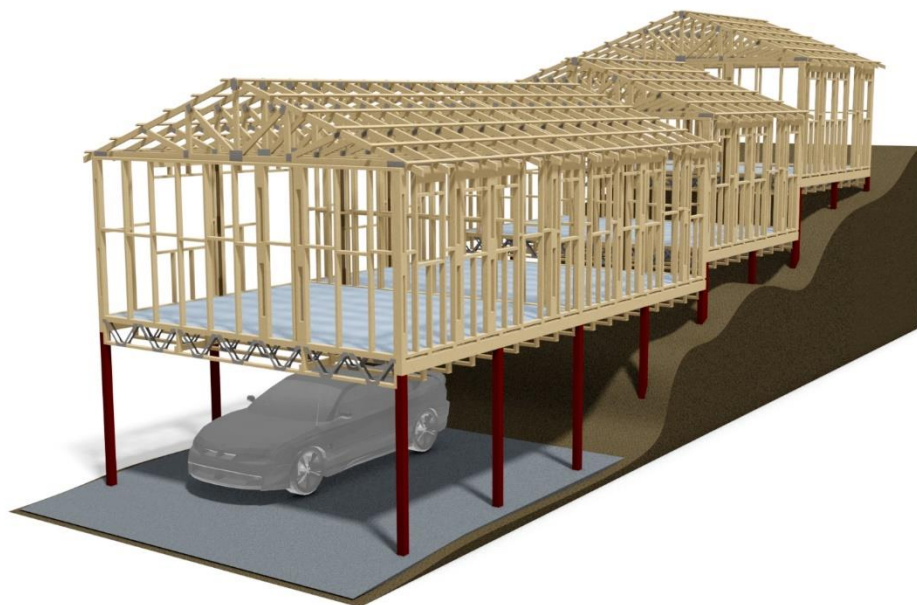


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I can only express my commiserations to readers who do not live in Queensland, the "Sunshine State", where it is "Beautiful one day, perfect the next." The future for housing in "Tomorrows Queensland" surely lies in the past with the Queenslander design as befits the "Smart State". It is said that "Nothing beats Queensland" but certainly, here in the "Slogan State", nothing beats a Queenslander.

The Queenslander is an architectural style developed back in the 1840's and while not as common – is still constructed today. The quintessential Queenslander is a high-set, single-story house made of timber with characteristic veranda and corrugated iron roof. With the urban expansion of cities, the amount of flat land sites for new developments is reducing. Timber sub-floor construction on sloping sites brings with it many benefits mainly in the form of reductions in earthwork costs, which is required to bench the land for concrete slabs. A recent article written by Matthew Smith of Multinail revisits this design and quoted **A recent independent cost study comparing residential timber ground floors with concrete slabs on ground revealed that there can be a 33% saving when using a timber sub-floor option, when there is a 1500mm fall in the site.** There is even a 16% saving when using timber sub-floors on flat sites. [Click here for the full article.](#)

There are two other advantages of a Queenslander, heath and flood resilience.



My home was initially behind the sawmill with the usual carpets and curtains. I developed a dust allergy and was having to have surgery up my nose every 18 months to two years. That was seven times in total at that address!! My ENT specialist said, "Ted, you may have to work in dust but you don't have to live in it." I built our present home in 1992, which is about as traditional a Queenslander as you can meet. I reasoned that in ten years' time whatever I build will look dated so why not make it look really old, away from the more modern changing trends. There are no carpets and very few curtains. My health transformed with only one cleanout since I moved in. The timber floors are also better for your legs as well.



As a nation we seem to have lost our common sense. As one person put it, we are building homes where our grandparents wouldn't pitch a tent. On top of that we build them with materials that can't get wet. This was brought home forcefully to locals here in the Lockyer Valley in 2011 when an Inland tsunami tore through Grantham, just six minutes from where I live. Highset Queenslanders were generally spared and certainly didn't need to be gutted. Part of Dr Geoff Garrett's [*Understanding floods; Questions and Answers*](#), a government response to the catastrophe, was a design by Architect Michael Rayner, then of Cox Rayner (now a director

of [Blight Rayner](#)) which was based on his own personal experience. It led him to think if there might be a different model of a house for flood-resilience. As many houses were beyond repair, the owners had the choice to sell out at a loss or rebuild – the problem being what to create. His solution was a small footprint, 3 level contemporary version of the classic 'Queenslander'. But it is also designed to provide an alternative to apartment blocks as a means of facilitating high densities without discarding the single family detached house type.



The house design comprises three levels performing differently during a flood:

- Ground Level: This level comprises only utility functions (staircase, water tanks, laundry, store, garage) which allow floodwaters to flow through and are resilient to damage.
- Middle Level: This level comprises open plan living, with openable sides, that also allow floodwaters to flow through.
- Upper Level: This level is well above the 2011 flood level, and comprises bedrooms but acts in a flood as the level for downstairs furnishings and other household items to be taken for refuge. In the event of catastrophically high flood, it also allows for floodwaters to flow through.

The three-level house requires a footprint of only 140m² and fits readily on a 250m² allotment. The design preserves the principles of the classic Queenslander but amplifies the character by enabling opening up of the sides and ends of the living level responsive to prevailing climatic conditions and orientation.

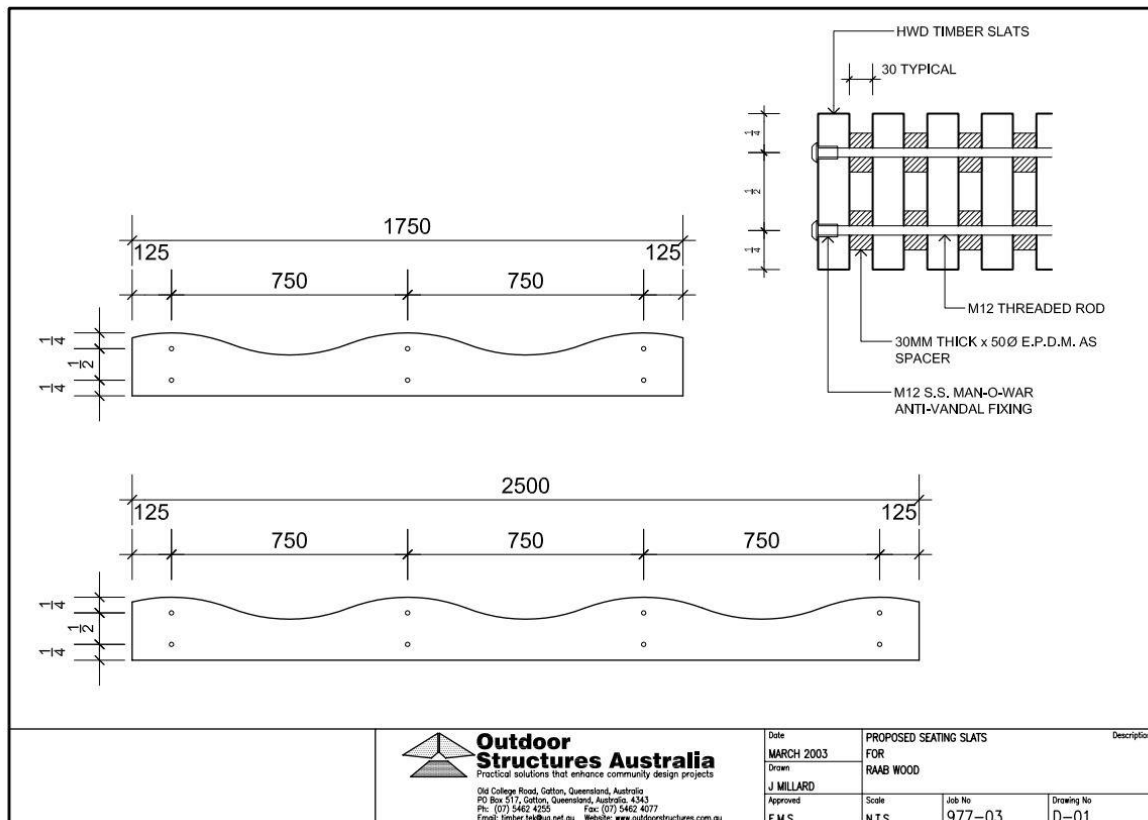
Here is a link to [more about the home in Michael's own words and extra images.](#)

Long live the Queenslander in its various iterations!

Spotted Gum in Budapest



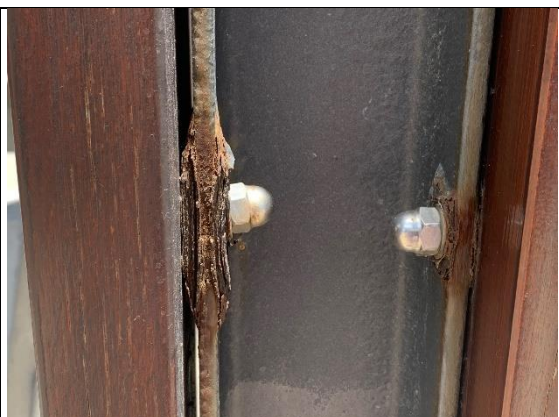
This edition of my newsletter welcomes back an old friend Monika Horvth of Raab Wood in Hungary. [Monika is responsible for the best laid Australian hardwood floors that I have ever seen.](#) In the early 2000's I supplied her with spotted gum and above is an image taken in 2003 of my son and I standing beside seats I supplied in in beautiful Budapest. Monika had them fabricated locally. They are produced from ex 250x50 prior to kiln drying and dressing. Either the architect was a prophet as it enforces social distancing or, more likely, understood that strangers don't like sitting next to each other.



Generally you need select grade timber to produce external landscaping but these seats are an exception and can be made with off the shelf structural timber. Let me talk you through it. There are seven pieces per seat which means you have 14 faces and 14 edges. You only see two faces and seven edges. The first stage is to sort through the seven pieces and pick the best two faces, these are obviously the outside pieces. Then sort the edges looking for the best faces making sure any gum vein is down and use the scallops to your advantage to remove defects such as knots. You may have to end for end some pieces. So, with just a little bit of sorting you can produce a product that looks beyond the quality purchased. Yes, there will be natural feature but what the eye does not see the heart does not grieve. Don't assume it is going to happen. Remember this task will be conducted by the lowest paid person in the chain despite it being the most important step. Document this selection process in your drawings.

These seats have an additional requirement because of the very cold winters. Open gum pockets etc, if present need to be aligned so moisture does not sit in it. As it turns to ice it will open up further. (Ah, Queensland, where it is "beautiful one day, perfect the next.") Monica advised me that the seats are still in good order as I would expect.

Tell me How to Detail it Correctly



The newsletter is getting to long so I will leave till next month the feedback on this question.

[Index of Newsletter Articles](#)

Are you aware that there is an index for the newsletters from 2015 onward? [Here is the link.](#)

[Pre-release Copies of My New Guide - Timber in Playgrounds Available](#)

The guide to timber in playgrounds written by myself and senior respected Architect Ralph Bailey ([The Architect behind Frew Park](#)) has had the text finalised. Word won't allow me to do some formatting I need so so next step is to have it professionally formatted. I am selling advanced copies. There should not be a playground designer, manufacturer, installer, inspector and owner in the country that does not have a copy of this book. If you are an asset owner, this guide will allow you to purchase well and avoid thousands of dollars in maintenance and premature replacement costs simply by having the tenderers submit the completed design checklist. This same checklist can also work as part of your tender documentation.

Frankly, some of things we encountered were just frightening. We were appalled at the ignorance of timber and the effect of the Australian climate that some manufacturers had. After one visit, Ralph reminded me that the purpose of this book is to save lives. [Here is a case history of a playground that is done very well.](#)

[Order your copy of the pre-release version here.](#) The document can be updated at no extra cost when finalised.

[Need a Timber Consultant or Expert Witness?](#)

I have over 40 years' experience in the industry and can assist you with many of your timber needs.

Inspection – I can assess timber products on their performance, fitness for purpose or cause of failure. I also examine whether best practice was used in design and construction. I have recently completed inspections on boardwalks, bollards, support beams and external timber furniture.

Grading - Quite literally, I have written the book on the subject. Recent experience has shown that up to 30% of timber supplied may not be to grade.

Design - I can provide detailed technical drawings and advice. I can also review already prepared drawings.

Reports - I have authored many books on timber and can prepare a report providing recommendations and practical instructions on to how to rectify issues.



Please note as I am now employed a Senior Timber Consultant with the firm BCRC all large and complex consultancies and requirements for an expert witness will be handled in conjunction with them. Existing consulting arrangements remain unchanged and I am also available to assist on small projects. For more information see www.bcrc.com.au

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