

Over the last 6 to 8 weeks the BSA along with welcome support from Timber Queensland have been delivering a number of information sessions to both contractors and home owners.

In excess of 700 contractors and 300 consumers have participated in 22 information sessions conducted throughout the Brisbane and Ipswich areas, west to Dalby and north to Emerald. In addition the BSA set up information booths in 6 flood affected shopping precincts and for periods of 3 days at a time.

The purpose of these sessions was to better inform contractors and home owners so that they could make informed decisions when completing flood rebuilding and or repairs to affected dwellings. Many of these decisions depended upon budgets as in many instances homeowners do not have sufficient funds available to complete all the required works.

Both contractors and home owners have to work together to establish priorities and stage works in accordance with budgets. There are no shortcuts. Shortcuts will only result in failures later on down the track and the onus will be on the contractor to rectify any failures.

The information sessions have been further complemented with the presence of industry experts such as the Association of Wall and Ceiling Industries, Electrical Safety Office, Master Electricians, Master Painters, Master Plumbers, Workplace Health and Safety, HIA and QMBA. These organisations provided vital information especially to the home owner.

The main emphasis of these seminars was not to rush in and complete work prematurely but to ensure the framing and substrates had been cleaned, sanitised and dried prior to commencing rebuilding work.

We were aware that some insurance companies were telling owners and contractors not to strip out bathrooms and only to partially strip water damaged wall linings as they could be saved if allowed to dry.

The BSA along with Timber Queensland refute this suggestion arguing that at least one wall must be stripped and floors where tiles are laid on a timber substrate must also be stripped to allow for drying.

Although this stance is contentious and at odds with a number of insurance companies, experience to date with BSA/TQ monitoring a number of dwellings as they dry out' entirely supports the BSA/TQ approach.

One house had been stripped out, except for the bathroom, and fans had been running almost non stop for 7 weeks. Timber Queensland and BSA conducted some moisture readings last week and the timber framing and yellow tounge flooring generally were reading between 16 and 20% with 16% being the maximum moisture content recommended before re-lining.

However the yellow tounge flooring and framing under the bathroom that was still over laid with a waterproof membrane and tiles was still reading in excess of 40% moisture content eventhough it was unenclosed underneath the particleboard. That bathroom has now been stripped out.

So you can see the drying process will take time. This is why the amount of repair work to date has been minimal. If houses have had mechanical assistance to dry then works should now start to appear. But if the drying process is via natural means it may be several months before the work picks up.

In relation to the cyclone affected areas in north queensland the BSA will be shortly commencing a series of discussion forums in the Cairns, Tully and Cardwell areas. The information will be similar such as what to those undertaken in South East Queensland after the floods but with an emphasis on roof and wall tie downs.

Next week BSA compliance teams will commence site visits to the flood affected areas of Brisbane and Ipswich with the intention of compliance with licensing requirements and BSA home warranty issues. Additionally these teams will be providing information to home owners and answering the frequently asked questions in relation to flood rebuilding.

So the main message we wish to portray to contractors this afternoon is not to rush and complete work. Make sure the timber framing and associated substrates are suitably dried.

Advise home owners what needs to be done first in line with their budgets and do not take any shortcuts and complete all works in accordance with the relevant building codes and standards. Remember you can not contract out of your statutory liability to undertake all constructions in accordance with the Building Code of Australia. Taking short cuts or doing patch up jobs that do not meet the requirements of the code could result in the responsible contractors being held responsible for rectifying that work at a later stage.

Although it is easy to be sympathetic with home owners who have repair costs likely to well exceed their available funds do not take on their problems at your potential risk and cost. Instead advise the home owners of what is required and assist them to stage the works to fit in with their budget.

