

Using timber in outdoor project design

Timber is such an incredible versatile material, especially when used in outdoor environments. It offers flexibility of design and construction, long service life, and provides a huge range of products for any designer. This feature will focus on the choices and decisions of specifying treated timber in an award winning project.

Brisbane Landscape Architect Stephen Pate is well known for his pursuit of environmentally sensitive design. In fact his work on the Edenbrooke project (an Urban Pacific Development) won three Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (Qld Group) awards in 2002 for Excellence in Environmental and Landscape Design. The Urban Development Institute of Australia (Qld) also recognised its excellence with the Environmental award for 2002.

Edenbrooke is an 600 lot housing development which features water sensitive urban design practices, is located on Brisbane's south-western suburbs and was once an heavy industrial site. The landscape masterplan involved the reconstruction and restoration of Jindalee Creek, the preservation of existing habitat links, the retention of native trees, the construction of wetlands, weed removal and revegetation and the construction of an impressive central park featuring trails, play equipment, BBQs, picnic shelters, timber boardwalks, and environmental education signage

image: Cypress Playground



The use of timber for the majority of architectural structures was a defining choice due to its environmental attributes, Pate stated that it helped that timber comes from a renewable resource unlike many other construction products, however 'because timber is aesthetically pleasing in this type of environment, it was our first choice'.

Stephen Pate's main concerns when using timber is its durability and UV weathering, 'it has to last, and not deteriorate over time'. He used a number of timber products to performs different tasks. Cypress *Callitris glaucophylla* was selected for playground equipment because of prior confidence in the product. The specie relies on its natural durability when used outdoors and cannot be preservative treated.

Pate also stressed that he found that design creativity was enhanced by timber companies and suppliers providing certified and fit-for-purpose products such as boardwalks and bridges. Outdoor Structures Australia (OSA), a well known specialists in boardwalk products, provided solutions for this difficult site.

OSA use Tanalith E as the preservative treatment of their predominately Spotted Gum *Corymbia citriodora*, range of timber products. Once this treatment has penetrated into the sapwood the elements are chemically fixed and are highly resistant to leaching, a desired outcome in this ecologically sensitive site.



image: Picnic/BBQ Shelters



image: Main Bridge and Boardwalk in constructed wetland

The landscape architect had put enormous efforts in ensuring ecological design, and we made sure that our products met and complimented this ideology' stated Ted Stubbersfield of OSA..

The timber suppliers knowledge of the intended use of their products is becoming more important, especially in developments such as Edenbrooke. Pate believes that while landscape architects are technically trained, changes to products and recommended practices, requires the timber suppliers and designers to engage in co-operative partnerships for each project.

This viewpoint is shared among many designers and builders across the country. No longer can timber product suppliers rely on the specifier knowing everything about the technical aspects of treatments or other modifications.

The Edenbrooke project is a fine example of how the designers communicated their need and how timber manufacturers met that need. This partnering approach provides the best outcomes for both the supplier and designer.

For more information on preservative treated timber issues, visit:

(ATD) www.tradac.org.au/atd/archives/issues.html

(Timber Preservers Association) www.tpa.com.au

(Koppers Australia) www.koppers.com.au

(Osmose) www.osmose.com.au (under-construction)



image: Community way-finding totems

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