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NEW 2012 EDITION

The Little Black Book of Flooring Secrets

- Why you should NEVER leave your flooring decisions to a man
- Tactics used by "dodgy" flooring companies and how to spot them a mile away
- The 6 most regrettable mistakes that women make when choosing a floor
- Choose this flooring and you and your family are in for heartache
- The 4 greatest myths about eco-friendly timber flooring
- The single method used by great real estate agents that can easily add 10% to your sale price
- The misinformation that can easily lead you to make terrible flooring choices
- Why "Made in Australia" is the worst choice for timber flooring
- The 5 crucial signs that your discounted flooring will cause you long-term pain
- The lessons learned from Victoria's recent flash floods so that you can avoid disaster
- The 3 major risks of using recycled timber
- Why flooring disputes are the No. 1 problem in the construction industry

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- Flash floods so that you can avoid disaster
- Lessons learned from Victoria's recent floods so that you long-term pain
- Why you should NEVER leave your discounted

Firstly, I'd like to thank you for choosing to receive this book, a gift to new flooring buyers who are about to make one of the most important decisions to do with their home's construction or renovation. The aim of this guide is to offer my knowledge and experience to help you avoid the common problems and issues I have seen all too often in the flooring industry.

My name is Andre Roslaniec and I have been involved in the flooring industry in Melbourne for over 25 years. Over that time, I have seen many flooring companies and flooring products come and go. As my company has completed a lot of insurance work for the RACV, AAMI, and GIO along with being an expert consultant at flooring disputes tribunals, I've seen first-hand the problems that can arise when poor decisions have been made. I've noticed that most problems and disputes were easily avoidable but people were frustrated that the right information wasn't available to help them when they really needed it.

I've been very challenged at times yet rewarded with the successful completion of many small and large flooring projects such as the National Museum of Victoria, Government House, and the Art Centre. My latest project, is my opportunity to finally get the right flooring information to you so that you can make sound, well-informed decisions. Decisions that will not only make your home look beautiful and be a joy for you and your family to live in but also significantly increase the resale value of your home.

Before we continue, a disclaimer: *The contents of this guide are based on my 25 years of experience working full-time in Melbourne's flooring industry along with the feedback and knowledge of many of the best flooring installers I know. However, your particular flooring situation has many factors that need careful assessment and this is something that cannot be done in this guide. Always check facts and information and get second opinions from those with the skills and experience and who back it all up with sound reasons why!*

So let's get going and learn the twelve most important secrets to ensuring that you make successful flooring choices...

1. Why you should NEVER leave your flooring decisions to a man!

I know this statement sounds sexist but in my experience, women tend to have a much better appreciation for colour and what does and doesn't work in the home. Women tend to spend the most time in their homes so have a better sense and feel for the various living areas. They also have a much better idea of the practicalities of

certain flooring and how it will work for their family, furniture and fittings within their home.

An example that I often find is with choices that a lot of men make regarding floor finishes. Many are keen on gloss finishes which just aren't practical when it comes to cleaning. Gloss shows all the marks and scratches easily and tends to reflect a lot of light. I know this may come as a surprise to most women, but men don't tend to wash or clean floors very often so have little appreciation for everyday wear and tear which all has an effect on most timber and bamboo flooring surfaces.

2. Tactics used by "dodgy" flooring companies and how to spot them a mile away!

There are a number of different tactics that "dodgy" flooring companies use in an effort to sell their products and that you need to watch-out for. Once you've purchased your flooring it will often be too late to return it for a refund when you find there are problems.

One tactic that I've seen is when flooring companies apply an arbitrary standard or grade to their timber which has no relation to any recognised timber standards in Australia or internationally for that matter. Traditionally with hardwood timber flooring, there has been Select, Standard and Feature grades but some companies are producing grades quite different to these.

Once their own arbitrary grade has been produced, they then create a name for it based on a variation of the traditional timber grades such as "Standard Plus" or some other grade. The problem is, these combined grades may contain 20% Standard and 80% Select timber or some other combination with widely varying quality results that can't be relied upon.

Also, some companies will mix different species of timber from a particular forest and create a new species name that doesn't actually exist. This will then be sold as a little-known, exotic timber. It is easy to package and market timbers in this way but once installed the problems start to appear and the battle with the "dodgy" flooring companies begins.

It's also not uncommon for some timber flooring suppliers to place eco-friendly stamps and stickers on their products with the intention to better sell or market the product rather than the following of any standards. Some will go as far as providing certificates that will state compliance with ISO standards (International Organisation for Standardisation).

There are also some flooring companies and suppliers that claim that their timber has come from a specific forest. Again, some international suppliers will say anything and happily get away with it when no deeper investigation is done by buyers.

Another common tactic used by “dodgy” flooring companies is to quote below cost to win customers then try and make up for this during installation. To achieve savings they may for example use poor-quality or watered-down products or take unnecessary extra time. Once the floor has been installed is not the time to be finding-out that you have issues and in my insurance work I’ve seen problems happen many years after the floor has been laid.

To spot these problems before you purchase timber flooring, all you need to do is to ask for the phone numbers of the respective authorities and call them up. If they don’t give you clear reasons and justification, just contact Standards Australia by visiting their Website at: <http://www.standards.org.au> who will be able to help you identify if the claims are in-fact legitimate. It’s also a good idea to call a long established flooring company who provide a wide range of timber flooring products as they will more than likely be able to verify legitimate claims.

3. The six most regrettable mistakes that women make when choosing a floor!

Not knowing how or what to ask flooring companies and flooring installers is the single area that causes the most long-term pain when choosing a new floor. For many flooring companies, there are crucial details that will have a large impact over the installation but are seen as unnecessary to communicate to their customers. Sometimes, flooring companies will actually play on a potential customer’s lack of knowledge and take advantage in order to make the sale. To avoid this situation, it’s important that you avoid making the following six crucial mistakes when talking to any flooring company or flooring installer:

Regrettable mistake 1

Not insisting that a moisture meter be used on the timber or bamboo just prior to installation and having the results recorded and witnessed!

The moisture content of your new timber or bamboo floor installation is critical to the quality of your floor over time. The risk of buckling, warping or poor sealing is increased dramatically with timber that contains too much moisture. These problems appear gradually over time and so can easily be put-down to something the home owner has done rather than the flooring or installation company.

One of the key reasons why there are a relatively high number of moisture related flooring problems in Australia is because there are actually no legally enforceable standards or requirements around timber moisture content and the use of moisture meters. This means that despite there being Australian standards for tolerable moisture content for different species and types of timber flooring, they are largely ignored by many of the lower-quality companies as there's no risk of penalties (apart from unhappy customers).

Many of the problems that I've seen with timber and bamboo floors that obviously hadn't been tested and contained too much moisture, happened quite soon after installation. Within a year or two, owners started to notice gaps that opened as the timber moved and shrank far more than what is normal, resulting in broken and unsealed joints. This is particularly important with bamboo floors as they can be very problematical if they are installed with excessive moisture or if installed like traditional timber flooring.

Regrettable mistake 2

Not asking for evidence of training and/or qualifications!

Another problem is the lack of qualified flooring installation staff in Victoria. Over the past decade, there has actually been a Victorian timber flooring apprenticeship but with very few graduates as there is no requirement or expectation for installers to have this qualification. This means that most flooring companies have installers that learn on the job and may or may not install floors to relevant Australian standards or requirements. Without up-to-date training, industry support and enforced standards, it is difficult for flooring companies and installers to be motivated enough to seek-out the knowledge and qualifications that they need.

Regrettable mistake 3

Not checking their track-record!

In psychology, it is often said that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. In the flooring industry, this is particularly true! Over the past decade there have been large improvements in new, "natural" or eco-friendly flooring products such as pre-finished bamboo which has become very popular.

These new products have created a relatively, much higher demand for timber and bamboo flooring compared to carpet, tiles and other "less natural" floor coverings. The problem is, many builders, carpet layers and flooring companies have wanted "in on the action" but without the knowledge, skills or qualifications needed. By relying on various construction companies that do not have a history and proven track-record

of performance in the area of timber and bamboo floor supply and installation, you leave yourself open to problems.

Regrettable mistake 4

Not checking for a guarantee on both product and installation!

With timber and bamboo flooring companies not being legally required to follow specific standards or use moisture meters, you would want a very strong guarantee! A clear sign that a flooring or installation company isn't confident in their product or work is the lack of a "solid" guarantee.

At a minimum you should expect a 20 year guarantee on timber and bamboo floors and 12 months on the installation. Make sure that it's in writing and that the conditions under which the guarantee comes into effect are clearly detailed and reasonable. Ask about prior guarantee claims from customers – what were they for? Again, the guarantee is only worth as much as is the quality of the flooring company that provides it so pay special attention to Regrettable mistake 3!

Regrettable mistake 5

Buying purely on price!

Buying on price when it comes to flooring is a real trap that I've seen countless times over the years. Money saved on the front-end inevitably ends-up adding a lot more cost over the life of the entire project. Why? Because there are so many factors with timber and bamboo flooring that can cause damage and be extremely disruptive to a family living in the home.

I've seen whole households needing to live in alternative, paid accommodation for over a month while a flooring problem was fixed and then move out again when it wasn't fixed properly. I've seen bamboo floors buckled so badly within a month of installation to the point of seeing the ground underneath! There's a whole raft of problems that can and do arise frequently when timber and bamboo flooring has been purchased purely on price.

Regrettable mistake 6

Not having a thorough assessment and inspection carried out as a first step!

You wouldn't have your builder start the construction of your new dream home without seeing the land that it's to be built on first would you? There could be a wide range of considerations that could affect the success of the building project!

Similarly, it's essential to have your flooring areas, ideas and options carefully and objectively assessed at the specific location where the new floor is to be installed. To

make the mistake of not doing this is a big one as to repair floors that have been installed incorrectly or should never have been laid in the first place, can be very expensive. I've seen floors that have cost 10 thousand dollars fully installed go on to cost 30 thousand dollars to repair – not a pretty picture!

Fortunately, you have no excuse not to have an assessment performed as it shouldn't cost you a cent due to the fact that you will potentially be spending a lot of money with the company you choose. If they want to charge you, make you feel obligated to use their services, or aren't forth-coming with useful advice and information, be very wary.

Examples of the type of advice that you could expect to receive during a good assessment and inspection consultation could include some of the following. To avoid dark floors in small rooms which will only make the rooms look even smaller. Lighter, oak colours are much better suited as they will provide a greater impression of space. You may also be advised against having traditional parquet flooring in an ultra-modern house which seldom works well.

Another example of good advice may be when looking at choosing a stained timber floor. A floor will tend to darken by approximately 30% within the first six months so you would be well-advised to choose a colour that's a shade lighter than the one you want.

Other areas for advice could be to do with existing fittings and fixtures in your home. I've seen problems happen when a floating floor has been installed before the kitchen. Floating floors will move, expand and stretch depending on temperature and humidity which will affect any large or heavy item placed on top of them. In situations when I have seen this done, there have been cupboards pulled-apart, benches become uneven and even kitchen sinks damaged!

4. Choose this flooring and you and your family are in for heartache!

There's nothing wrong with having a nicely carpeted floor and they can certainly provide a warm and snug feel to a home for those that like carpets. However, you need to clearly understand the problems and issues involved or else you will be in for heartache.

There are a number of different problems that can arise with increasing frequency depending on whether you have pets or children (or a particularly messy partner!). Obviously, the first is spilling liquids or food on the carpet. Because carpet is generally so absorbent, the smell and the colour can be difficult if not impossible to remove.

The surface or surfaces directly underneath the carpet can also cause problems if they are not sealed as liquids will often be able to penetrate and soak in. Common but particularly nasty excretions produced by humans and animals, such as urine etc can get into the wood or sub-surface materials and the smell will continue to be a problem. Short of lifting the carpet and replacing any underlay or floor boards, you may just have to live with the smell.

Insects and dirt are also problems as dust and dirt are collected very effectively by many carpets. Any small food particles trapped in carpets become a potential food source for insects such as mites which can then multiply and cause asthma or breathing issues for children and other family members. Obviously, regular vacuum cleaning will help greatly with reducing the chances of any problems such as insect infestations.

Carpets are also good absorbers of natural animal smells such as dog and cat smells! This means that carpeted homes that have animals that spend a lot of time in-doors will tend to develop an increasingly strong smell over time. Another issue is animal fur and hair which is easily caught by carpet fibres when animals sit or roll around on carpets.

Finally, even if you have no children or animals and are extremely careful with eating and drinking, the resale potential of your home will be limited compared to a timber or bamboo floor (See "6. The single method used by great real estate agents that can easily add 10% to your sale price!"). Of course, this can be overcome but may require the replacement of your carpets.

5. The 4 greatest myths about eco-friendly timber flooring!

Timber and bamboo flooring will always tend to be more eco-friendly than other non-natural flooring. In-fact, by choosing wood products wherever possible in house construction, greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to up to 25 tonnes of carbon dioxide per house could be saved in Australia (Cooperative Research Centre for Greenhouse Accounting), yet there is still a lot variation between the timbers. On top of this, different timber finishes can also have very different environmentally-friendly properties.

Myth 1

All timber is "environmentally friendly"

Not true! Tradition hardwood flooring taken from oak, bluegum, brushbox and other varieties, takes between 40 to 60 years to reach maturity before being ready for harvesting yet most will happily live-on for hundreds of years. Because these trees

take so long to grow, animals, insects and plant life all have plenty of time to use the trees for homes and shelter and become well established. This means that harvesting of these trees is very destructive to the established life in, on and around the trees.

This destruction is also a lot worse than it could be due to traditional timber being from such large and heavy trees. This means that powerful, heavy and polluting machinery and equipment are needed to harvest the trees, compounding the damage and destruction.

Myth 2

Bamboo is not as eco-friendly as traditional hardwood timber

Again not true! Bamboo timber (technically from the grass family), is often described as an inferior flooring product by those who don't understand it yet it has all the properties of hardwood and takes just five years to reach maturity. It is also more than double the hardness of most hardwood timbers. Due to its light weight and prolific growth it is easily harvested with far less damage done to the ecosystem.

It also doesn't require re-planting as bamboo shoots will happily sprout again, fully replacing the harvest. This means that bamboo produces about 25 times more wood per acre per year than hardwood forests and it absorbs up to four times the amount of carbon as hardwood timber. Its increasing popularity and use in flooring continues to reduce demand for native and other hardwood timbers.

Myth 3

If timber is certified as eco-friendly then it must be

Not true! Because of the lack of enforced and other standards in many large timber producing nations, this means that quality systems are not in place to ensure that only the best or most "eco-friendly" products are shipped. With Australia also having few enforced standards relating to timber, the area has been ripe for wildly varying quality and another key reason for why timber flooring in the past has been a high dispute area in the construction industry.

Myth 4

Environmentally friendly finishes are much better than traditional finishes

Not true! Many of the "environmentally-friendly" finishes used on timber products such as stains and oils are great for their small environmental benefits but often are not practical when used on timber floors. This is particularly true when they are used in high-traffic areas where they won't tend to last more than two years. This means that they will need to be reapplied multiple times which just isn't practical in most homes when you have to shift all your furniture out of each room that's being treated.

They are also quite a bit more expensive, costing between 30 and 40% more on average over standard finishes, so it's another catch that you need to be aware of.

The beauty with some of the modern, high quality, pre-finished bamboo and oak flooring, is that the finishes have already been applied. The best quality products will often have more than six separate applications of iron oxide coating which is non-toxic and extremely durable, protecting and sealing the wood inside.

6. The single method used by great real estate agents that can easily add 10% to your sale price!

The presentation of any home or business is an important factor in the sales process. Real estate agents know this well and just how much value a beautiful floor can make to the eventual sale price of the house. However, all floors are not created equal and in Melbourne, timber and bamboo floors rule!

Do anything to expose a timber or bamboo floor!

Because buyers prefer wood, savvy real estate agents advise many home vendors to remove carpets and furnishings that cover wooden floors even if it means tearing-up a newly laid carpet as they just know they'll get a higher sale price. This has become pretty-much standard practise in home sales and is done because it works! So let's look at some of the main reasons why you should expose your timber or bamboo flooring and polish-it-up to appeal to buyers:

Reason 1

A timber or bamboo floor in good condition tends to highlight both the living spaces and furnishings in your home. These are the spaces such as your kitchen, living and dining areas, entrances and hallways where you and your family spend most of your active living time and are the first places for your visitors to see.

Reason 2

During open house inspections, real estate agents also know that timber and bamboo floors are seen as more environmentally friendly by potential buyers rather than alternatives such as synthetic, plastic or resin based floors. Timber has been used in the construction of homes for many thousands of years so will always tend to be viewed as the best type of environmentally friendly material.

Reason 3

If you happen to have one of the new, pre-finished bamboo or oak floors installed, you can normally expect to receive an even better sale price – why? Because the new

pre-finished bamboo and oak flooring products have a number of visual and practical advantages over most traditional timber floors.

So how much value can be added with timber floors? Traditional wood floors will often add as much as 15 to 30 thousand dollars (all things being equal), which can sometimes be enough to pay the agent! However, a high-quality, pre-finished bamboo or oak floor can add between 30 and 70 thousand (all things being equal).

So why so much more for the new pre-finished bamboo and oak floors? Well, it comes down to the higher standards of finish, practicality and sophistication with high-quality pre-finished flooring. The new pre-finished bamboo floors have a beautiful grain signature and look to them. They are also significantly harder and more durable than hand-finished, traditional timber floors. The new pre-finished oak floors have the beautiful look of tradition oak flooring yet are also finished to a much higher standard so they last for decades without the need of regular maintenance. A further benefit with both types of pre-finished flooring is that they can be re-sanded to bring them back to as-new condition!

As the qualities of pre-finished floors are becoming more widely know, they are becoming increasingly sought-after by home buyers. A recent, high-end, pre-finished oak flooring installation that I was recently involved with was to showcase a beautiful historical homestead that ended-up selling for 22 million dollars and well above what was expected. The owner was ecstatic from the comments received about the class of the pre-finished, aged-oak flooring complementing the overall quality and feel of the home.

7. The misinformation that can easily lead you to make terrible flooring choices!

A real danger when choosing what type of flooring to purchase can sometimes be taking the advice from someone who is biased towards one flooring product or another. Often, this happens without the person being listened-to, having the experience or depth of knowledge about each of the alternatives and their practical suitability for your specific flooring situation. You never want to be in the situation of relying completely on the advice of someone who hasn't actually been in to assess your home.

It's fine to ask about style or design related ideas from a friend, interior designer or architect but make sure that you balance it with more practical flooring advice. For example, talk to a number of different flooring experts and explain your particular situation and ideas. This will mean that you'll end-up with a clear idea of flooring options best suited to your situation that are both practical and look great.

No-matter how much you may love a particular type of flooring product, it may just be impractical in your home and cause a lot of pain over the long-term as you've now learned from this book. Some floors can look stunning in a magazine or brochure but just won't work in your home.

Some familiar examples are customers who have been sold on one of the new bamboo floors or a new carpet. Bamboo may look beautiful yet will be totally unsuitable to use in homes that have a lot of moisture underneath them. Similarly, a thick, luxurious carpet may look warm and inviting but will be wrecked if you have young children who are very likely to spill drink or drop lollies or food on it.

There are other important considerations that also need to be taken into account such as the period and look of the house, how the floor colour will change over time etc. It is difficult to have a clear and accurate understanding or "vision" for how your floor will look without a thorough assessment performed by an expert.

You'll also need to be wary of miss-information from a variety of other sources including the Internet. If the information is limited or doesn't really answer the questions that you have, look elsewhere. In the end, keep asking questions until you get good answers and always check the facts - if something doesn't sound right it probably isn't!

Finally, an inexperienced flooring company or flooring installer may provide misinformation unknowingly due to their lack of knowledge, skills or equipment to work with a particular type of timber or installation. An example is a traditional flooring company that says that bamboo flooring cannot be sanded which is not true unless of poor quality. Like a lot of other things, an experienced floor layer will surprise you with the range of options that are possible with your home or renovation.

8. Why "Made in Australia" is the worst choice for timber flooring!

The majority of bamboo and pre-finished flooring products are imported from overseas where growing conditions are far more suitable. Due to the popularity and greatly increasing quality of many of these newer flooring products, they are increasingly replacing traditional timbers such as spotted gum or blue gum out of Queensland or Tasmania etc. As this trend continues, the demand for the felling of Australian timber is reduced.

It means that Australian forests can be left to grow and benefit the Australian natural environment as effective absorbers of carbon dioxide and be enjoyed by all Australians. Australian forests are a carbon sink which back in 2004 removed a net

43.7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere (2004 Australian National Greenhouse Gas Inventory, Australian Greenhouse Office 2006).

As I previously mentioned under “The 4 greatest myths about eco-friendly timber flooring”, a lot of pollution and disruption to the natural eco-system is generated from the timber harvesting process. To reduce this “disruption” in Australia is key to reducing our carbon “footprint” and if the current trend towards bamboo flooring continues, our timber will be replaced by far-more environmentally friendly alternatives.

9. The five crucial signs that your bargain will cause you long-term pain!

Like most products and services, you need to be very careful when buying a timber or bamboo floor on price such as from an auction. You need to ask the right questions as to why the timber or bamboo is being sold cheaply. Is it because no one else wants it? Can you be sure of the quality and type of timber or bamboo? Will you have enough timber and bamboo floorboards and will each piece be long enough to successfully complete the job? Of course, purchasing cheap timber or bamboo is only the beginning as the installation of it can take between one day and one month depending on the type of timber purchased.

Sign 1

Experienced flooring companies won't touch the job

If you've purchased cheap flooring, an experienced flooring company often won't touch the installation of it as they simply can't guarantee the quality of it. The last thing they need is to end-up constantly fixing problems for a frustrated client who purchased a sub-standard product.

Sign 2

Lack of a clear guarantee that you can rely on!

As I have already mentioned in “The six most regrettable mistakes that women make when choosing a floor”, you should expect a strong guarantee on both the flooring product and the installation of that product. There should be a 20+ year guarantee on the product and at least 12 months on the installation but length of guarantee is not the only consideration.

Look at how “solid” and actionable the guarantee is. It should spell-out exactly when the guarantee comes into force, a clear process for activating the guarantee, and it

should make good sense. Overall, make sure the guarantee works for YOU as you're the one who is paying a lot of money for your new flooring and if things go wrong you don't want hassle! I've seen far too many unhappy clients who chose a "cheap" flooring product or company only to pay for it many times over in the cost of fixing product and installation issues when a guarantee was non-existent or not worth the paper it was written on.

Sign 3

Flooring sold via an auction!

When it comes to flooring, auctions are a proven format for selling products that are often of poor quality or that people don't want! The auction has become a method used by some of the newer flooring companies attempting to gain market share. Because they may have sourced a cheap supply of in-demand flooring, they will attempt to cash-in on this demand by selling dubious quality product in bulk and take advantage of customers wanting to save money.

Some of the tell-tale signs of poor quality timber flooring include poor machining of the boards so they won't fit together nicely during installation. They'll also tend to be much more problematical during installation and consequently take a lot more time and effort to lay – adding to your costs.

Sign 4

Early cracking, warping and separation!

Once cheap, low-quality timber and bamboo flooring has been laid (such as often purchased from an auction), you are quite likely to see cracks, warping and splitting appear within six months to a year. There is a high probability that the timber or bamboo has been stored somewhere for a long time before it was sold to get rid of it. This frequently means that the timber has been left in poor areas quite unsuitable for timber or bamboo storage such as areas open to contamination and moisture.

For low-quality pre-finished floors, they will often show signs of separation and peeling of the various layers. There may also be patches appearing on the wood where one of the layers has been damaged in some way.

With the demand for timber and bamboo flooring over the past decade often exceeding supply, it is not too hard for flooring suppliers or companies to sell their poor quality products at auctions but there is no need for it.

Sign 5

Odd-sized lengths, insufficient quantities and difficulties with finding matching timber or bamboo flooring!

Once cheap flooring is purchased it can not only be problematical to install but also difficult to find again in useable sizes. I've spoken to many customers who made the mistake of buying cheap only to find that the delivered timber was not at all what they expected or were led to believe.

It's not uncommon to find odd lengths, thicknesses and shapes in the timber or bamboo flooring delivery which reduces the useable quantity of timber for installation. To then try and source the same type of timber can be difficult as no-one stocks the timber due to its unusual blend of timbers or poor quality. It can be very frustrating for customers when they find that a room in their new house will have a distinct change of flooring or joins appearing on some lengths which are inconsistent with the rest of the floor.

10. The lessons learned from Victoria's recent flash floods so that you can avoid disaster!

With the recent Victoria floods I saw hundreds of damaged floors from a wide number of different flooring companies and installers as part of the work I did for the big insurance companies. It wasn't surprising, but the high-quality timber and bamboo floors that were installed well, often avoided a lot of damage beyond the superficial while the poor quality required complete replacement.

The higher quality floor installations had much better quality, stronger glues which resisted the moisture and any swelling of the timber or bamboo. They also had much stronger finishes that resisted the moisture and protected the wood inside much better than the poor quality floors.

There are basically three types and prices of glues that are approved for use on timber and bamboo floors and recommended by flooring companies - \$2 glue, \$7 glue and \$13 glue. The \$13 glue, despite being the most expensive, held the floor together far better than the cheaper glues as it is relatively much stronger. It's one area that budget minded renovators or home builders might try and save on but which sets them up (or the eventual owner of the home), for problems if flooding occurs. It's another example of skimping at the beginning then paying for it over the long term.

11. The three major risks of using recycled timber!

Using recycled timber is definitely an environmentally friendly use of pre-used flooring but there are some major risks with it to. These risks are to do with how the recycled timber has been treated and used over the years - substances applied (or

spilled), and nails and insects that may still be in the timber. There are also risks associated with the cost and flooring companies passing-off newer timber as antique timber for premium prices.

Risk 1

Firstly, you don't often know how the timber was treated, stained or finished in the past and with what substances. Over the years, I've spoken to customers who purchased old recycled timber to find that there were a number of areas of contamination or discolouration. Depending on the degree of contamination, some of these affected areas may not be able to be sanded-out so will need replacement of the boards and careful matching which can often be difficult.

Contamination of the timber is not just related to visual effects as some of the old lead based paints and volatile organic compounds can carry health risks and this is particularly important to assess for timbers used inside homes. This obviously makes the history of the timber vital for you to know but accurate information is very difficult to obtain.

Risk 2

Secondly, you often don't know what's actually IN the timber with some of it riddled with nails and pieces of nails, tacks or wire. Recycled timber that has not been completely cleared of such material will cause problems during the installation of the floor. If any sanding is done to the floor, either as part of the initial installation of the floor or in the future, damage can often be caused to sanding disks and machinery.

Quite apart from any metal materials in the timber, there can also be living insects. Even if dead, insects such as termites and woodworms such as the powderpost beetle larvae, may have already damaged the wood and be difficult to detect. If you haven't seen the damage that these insects can do to a floor or house, you don't want to as they can be highly destructive to timber and very difficult to completely eliminate.

Risk 3

Thirdly, recycled timber flooring can often be a lot more expensive than a new timber floor. Because flooring is so visible and walked on daily, it needs to be much cleaner than the normal recycled timber that's been used on other parts of a house like exterior weatherboards. A lot of time is needed to carefully clean-up the recycled timber if it's to be used as floorboards such as by removing nails and the boards from the previous installation, cutting-off splintered or cracked ends etc which all adds to cost.

The other problem is inflated prices for what is described as “antique” timber flooring that is far newer than is claimed. To avoid this it is important to get evidence that supports the age of the wood even if you have to insist on it being independently verified.

12. Why flooring disputes are the No. 1 problem in the construction industry!

As a timber and bamboo flooring product and installation expert, I’m sometimes called upon to provide objective consulting in flooring dispute cases. I’ve learned that one of the top dispute areas seen at tribunals dealing with problems in the construction and housing areas, are to do with flooring. Part of the reason for this is the number of new flooring companies which have sprung-up over the past 5 to 8 years and the high demand for timber and bamboo flooring.

With so much demand and competition in the market, companies will sometimes cut corners just to win jobs – to make the sale. Unfortunately for both them and the customer, they both lose in the long term when poor flooring products are used or poor installation is done.

Some companies are so desperate that they will quote below their installation cost just to win the job and then cut as many corners as possible during installation such as using watered-down glues, varnishes and finishes or poor quality timbers. Three coats of 40% diluted polyurethane varnish will not be noticed to the untrained eye but will then last a lot less time than if undiluted. Other times, a supposed moisture barrier is stated as being applied but is in-fact just one of the cheaper glues which are normally used in the installation process anyway.

There is an increasing amount of poor quality timber being brought into Australia and this is also an effect of the increasing competition and demand over the years. Of course, this just means you have to do more research and check more of your facts before making a flooring purchase. Many owners of flooring companies and flooring suppliers can be more “entrepreneur” than “craftspeople” so they may be good at organising and delivering flooring products but have precious little knowledge apart from learning as they go.

After all is said and done, the most important advice I can give to you is to make sure that you talk to at least two qualified sources before making any decision as important as choosing a new timber or bamboo floor! The biggest risk for any

decision maker is not learning the main keys or factors that are important to flooring success over the long-term.

Whether you choose one of the popular new pre-finished bamboo or oak floors, a traditional hardwood timber floor or a carpeted floor - if you make your decision with good information and good reasons you can't go too far wrong. You may even be able to change an existing floor with some good advice on how to sand or stain it for the look you want – never close your mind to different options and possibilities.

Flooring doesn't have to be problematical or difficult. As the only timber product in any home that remains in constant contact with the inhabitants (you and your family), your floor supports everything you do – every task and activity! For that reason alone, your choice of flooring is crucial, but when done right, will offer a lifetime of enjoyment.

Thank you greatly for reading this book and I'm continuously answering questions and posting information on my social media sites and Website to help friends overcome problems and discover new flooring ideas. Feel free to follow me on Twitter (<http://twitter.com/#!/AndreRoslaniec>) watch my series of short but informative videos on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/user/astoriafloors/featured>) and Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/astoriafloors>) along with my regular blog posts on www.astoriafloors.com.au

I look forward to helping you!

Andre Roslaniec



Andre Roslaniec is a timber and bamboo flooring expert and the owner of Astoria Floors based in Cheltenham, Melbourne, Victoria. He built the company over 25 years ago and is passionate about helping home owners, renovators and developers learn the knowledge that they need to avoid making mistakes when choosing timber and bamboo flooring.