

Press Release 5 February: DANA Leaky Homes Review Release

Title: The Leaky Home Catastrophe: Has New Zealand Learnt Its Lesson?

A new 240 page DANA Review called *'Rotten to the Core: The Inside Story of New Zealand's Looming Leaky Home Catastrophe'* concludes that the short answer is: Apparently not.

This Review is the result of several months of research and interviews in 2017 by DANA Director Dennis Neilson, and DANA associates.

This included amassing and analysing over 3,000 pages of documentation and interviewing more than 100 sources familiar with the saga.

DANA has identified that this is by far the most shameful episode in New Zealand political history.

The 'leaky homes', or more accurately called the 'rotting timber homes' catastrophe may well end up costing New Zealand homeowners more than \$50 billion, and even up to \$100 billion.

And most of these costs were avoidable, if only a few decision makers had bothered to do some basic research, or had even used their common sense in the mid-1990s and after.

More than 90 years ago, the New Zealand Forest Service (NZFS) stated that houses built of timber cut from the then new plantation wood species radiata pine would have to be treated to prevent it rotting if it got wet.

The State Advances Corporation (in the 1940s the only lender for house construction) restated this requirement in the late 1940s, and just so no-one could ever be confused, the NZFS forcefully reiterated this requirement in 1950.

A major national inquiry into wood treatment in 1952 concluded that treatment of radiata pine framing timber (with boron) should be mandatory, and it was – for an unbroken spell of more than 40 years until 1995.

During that period there were no measurable house timber failures caused by decay.

But then the wheels fell off, as from 1991 to 1995 a four year propaganda campaign was waged by some wood processing/treating companies to reverse over 40 years of providing safe housing timber. This campaign was even waged with religious zeal by some.

These people forced through new timber treatment standards in 1995, which allowed the use of untreated radiata pine timber in houses.

This was in spite of several meetings and seminars from 1991 to 1995, at which internationally renowned timber scientists and timber treatment specialists pleaded with the industry and government not to take this suicidal step.

Inexplicably the government either fell for this propaganda - or was part of the conspiracy - in spite of the by then 70 years of overwhelming written and obvious practical experience that treatment of radiata pine timber for houses was essential to prevent decay.

All their pleas were ignored – or worse were totally discredited.

The move all but guaranteed that tens and probably hundreds of thousands of innocent people would suffer terribly as a result of the timber in their houses rotting, as this new-fangled untreated kiln-dried radiata pine timber and water mingled in their houses to cause havoc and destruction.

Then it got even worse, as successive politicians added their weight to the then minor crisis, to ensure it became a major crisis – and then on to the catastrophe that it is rapidly becoming.

Almost 400,000 houses ended up with all or partially untreated timber house framing in them, until the standards were finally rescinded in 2011. All are at heightened risk of their timber rotting at some stage – if it has not already.

Even as rotten homes were a feature of the landscape by 2004, major companies and associations, government departments and politicians (right to the top), all fought tooth and nail against a move back to treated timber, and/or shamed anyone who suggested rotting homes were by then a serious problem.

Fast forward to 2018, when a new National Flower has been identified: The white plastic shrink-wrapped ‘tents’ which have ‘bloomed’ all over the country covering rotting timber houses being rebuilt (or increasingly demolished).

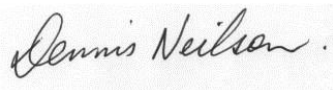
And inexplicably, in 2018 industry and government appear to want to (yet again) inflict upon home owners radiata pine timber that could well be (this time around) more than 40% and in some cases more than 50% untreated.

No. It appears that New Zealand has not learnt its lesson.

To order a Review online go to www.dana.co.nz or contact info@dana.co.nz

ENDS

Authorised for distribution 5 February

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis Neilson". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

Dennis Neilson

Director, DANA Limited