



ADVISORY NOTICE

BUILDING

17/06

Advisory Notices are issued to assist in the interpretation of the Development Act 1993

December 2006

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE:

Roof trusses – applications for building alterations

BACKGROUND

Independent research work undertaken by structural engineer John Goldfinch, of Koukourou Engineers, into failures of timber nail-plate roof trusses has indicated a disturbing number of failures where the nail-plates have worked their way out of the timber members such that they are no longer effective as load carrying components.

These instances are predominantly associated with a particular form of nail-plate that is no longer produced. This point provides comfort that new buildings are not involved, and that it only applies to existing buildings constructed pre-1997. Even then, not all pre-1997 buildings with nail-plate roof trusses will be affected but it is impossible to know which ones have the particular nail-plate that could be susceptible to failure.

DISCUSSION

Section 53A of the Development Act enables a relevant authority to require certain work to be done, to ensure that the building is safe, when considering an application. However, this provision can only be applied to buildings constructed prior to the prescribed date which has been gazetted to be 1 January 2002.

As a precautionary measure building surveyors are required to take the following action.

When considering an application for an alteration, or addition/extension, to an existing building the building surveyor (public or private) should:

- Ask for information on the date of construction.
- If the building was constructed prior to 1997, request information on the type of construction of the existing roof.
- If the roof framing is confirmed as comprising nail-plate trusses and it has a tiled roof, then an engineer's report on the condition of the trusses should be requested.

NOTE: The engineer's report does not need to be a certification of the structural adequacy of the entire roof framing. The aim is to get a professional inspection of the condition of the trusses so that any issues, such as nail-plates working out of the timber, are identified and rectified. The inspection should also verify that the existing roof framing is adequate to support any additional loads to be placed on it by the proposed extension or alteration.

- Should the engineer's report indicate problems with the trusses then the building surveyor should require remedial work to be done as a condition of approval pursuant to Section 53A.

Further information

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