

# Blame poor workmanship

Readers speak out about construction problems in new homes.

I am a carpenter by trade, currently employed as a site manager, and have supervised the construction of more than 100 dwellings in the past two years or so.

Poor workmanship is undoubtedly the primary cause of leak penetration. Very few leaks would occur if builders were as familiar with cladding systems and potential problem areas and solutions as they should be.

Timber manufacturers have successfully campaigned for the reduction in durability of the main structural components of housing, deliberately ignoring the potential result of the continuation of failure in cladding applications to protect their product from moisture.

**Colin Green.**

Anyone who is prepared to lower his standards and not use tanalised radiata for exterior walls and sub-floor has no perception of durability.

Those very clever people who permitted untreated, kiln-dried radiata have sold the people of New Zealand very short indeed. So the Building Industry Association has not done its homework.

**Ray Clarke.**

I would like to suggest that you consider expanding the coverage of the building issues to include rights and responsibilities of property owners, particularly under the Unit Titles Act and with respect to bodies corporate in multi-unit dwellings.

Many apartment owners, I believe, do not understand their rights and responsibilities relative to this law.

**Tammy Floore.**

I find your story interesting as we have three girls who all seem to have asthma-related symptoms which have developed in the three years we have been renting an old bungalow in Epsom.

The house is old and difficult to keep warm in winter, and we have put most of the kids' chest ailments down to this cause.

But on the outside of our house there is something really strange and sinister-looking. The plaster has become damp and started to bubble — and behind it is a dry, green, powdery mould. Is this what you're talking about?

You're most welcome to come and have a look and take a sample — I would feel a lot better knowing that this is not a rare bacterium that will creep into the house one day and choke us all to death.

**Tim Brown.**  
*Epsom.*

What upsets me is that builders seem to be beyond the law and the Disputes Tribunal supports them and there is no way to address this without throwing more and more money at it for lawyers and appeals.

**Andrew Ross.**



## ROTTING HOMES

Thanks for your sad story about leaky, rotten homes in New Zealand. It is very important to expose the rot in the residential construction industry.

The Coalition of Leaky Condo Owners estimates the magnitude of the problem in British Columbia to be 100,000 dwelling units, primarily condominiums, and a total repair bill of \$2 billion.

We have learned that developers, architects-designers and builders will promise safe, warm, dry homes but deliver leaky, rotten, mouldy homes whenever and wherever they can get away with it.

**Dr James Balderson.**  
*British Columbia, Canada.*

One of the few ways you could be totally sure of being totally leak-free would be to live in a hermetically sealed plastic bubble. God knows how you would get in and out.

The problem has been around since man first moved into caves, and I'm sure water gets into caves as well.

If you want a well-constructed home, engage a reputable, local builder, preferably a registered master builder who has been in business for many years.

Don't take the lowest price. Something will be missing from the lowest price — probably quality of materials and depth of experience. Unfortunately, we Kiwis have developed a "Warehouse" mentality and are attracted by cheap prices, not quality.

**Doug Enrich.**

I would just like to add something which may have been overlooked in the sagas of the shoddy house builders. Where was the council in all this?

Surely it is supposed to be inspecting premises in their various stages of construction.

**Linda Court.**

These days, there are so many "cowboys" out there in the building industry and often it is the owner of the building that has little or no protection at all.

Our house is under three years old and we discovered that there were leaks due to faulty workmanship in the roof only after noticing mould and rot in the ceiling. The house was then only a year old.

I believe that these so-called professionals should be charged as they just destroyed our pride and joy with their negligence.

**Austin Wong.**