



Current trends indicate strong and increased acceptance of Glulam



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Well, 2018 is here and for many in the industry it sounds like the end of year holidays were a slight bump in the road that did little to slow the pace! Vicbeam begins the year with a solid pipeline of work and continues day by day to be confronted with plenty of evidence that Glue Laminated Beams (Glulam) continue to be a product of choice for an increasing number of building designers in Australia.

True, there are challenges this year – changes in supply lines and attendant increases in

the cost of raw material remains tricky terrain to navigate for the timber industry as a whole – especially manufacturers, however, the outlook is overwhelmingly positive with every successful project the industry delivers only serving to increase interest and creativity in and around the use of timber.

The Glulam industry began in Europe around the mid-19th century and has been produced commercially in Australia for over half a century with many of our locally-sourced timber species being effectively glued together to produce engineered timber beams with consistent structural and aesthetic qualities.

Australian timber species such as Radiata Pine, Victorian Ash, Spotted Gum and White Cypress and others have all been effectively glued and installed over the years as curved beams, ridge beams, rafters, lintels, floor joists, posts or members of beautifully exposed bolted trusses.

Appearance grades are described in AS/NZS1328.1, Clause 2.7 as A, B and C with the latter being used for ap-

plications where appearance is not important and 'C Grade Glulam' continues to be available and used as the structural product of choice in many markets.

Since the entrance of LVL in the 80s and 90s, Glulam has increasingly become sought after as the premium choice in building design scenarios where the aesthetic quality of timber is just as important as its structural qualities. Vicbeam is one of a number of manufacturers that have been increasingly asked to produce 'A Grade' architectural finishes on their beams for specific applications in which the timber is a feature to be displayed.

The advent of television programs such as *Grand Designs* and *The Block*, which often showcase the beauty, structural efficiency and green credentials of timber and engineered wood products, has also served to increase exposure to the virtues and versatility of Glulam as a timber product and there has been a corresponding rise in interest.

One of the events prominent on the Vicbeam calendar each year is the bi-annual meeting

of the Glue Laminated Timber Association of Australia (GLTAA). This March (14 – 15) sees the GLTAA meeting being held in Brisbane with participating Glulam manufacturers from Australia and further abroad gathering to collectively address industry issues, discuss new and relevant technology, provide mutual accountability in relation to quality control, maintain third party certification as well as discuss and implement strategies to enhance and promote the use of Glulam in Australia.

The GLTAA was established in 1989 by the main Glulam manufacturers operating in Australia at that time. A GLTAA Inspectorate was established as a third-party quality assurance for the GLTAA members, subjecting the manufacturers to a very rigorous inspection and testing regime to ensure compliance with the relevant Australian Standards. The association was actively involved in shaping the revision of the relevant Australian Standards for Glulam that have prevailed for the last 30 years and is currently involved in an

advisory capacity in the development of the new Glulam standards.

The GLTAA membership is comprised of producers and importers of Glue Laminated Beams. In recent years the association has seen an influx in membership from manufacturers throughout Australasia keen to ensure their product conforms to the relevant Australian standards.

The GLTAA also welcomes as Associate members, businesses with commercial interests in Glulam such as adhesive manufacturers, engineered timber wholesalers and timber machinery suppliers. Manufacturers welcome the contributions and expertise of associate members and greatly benefit from their presence at GLTAA meetings. The GLTAA also reaps rewards from a membership pool which includes timber engineers with many years of experience and expertise.

The GLTAA is associated with the University of Melbourne which acts as the inspectorate for the GLTAA and carries out the qualification, and on-going audit process leading to the certi-

fication of each accredited members' Quality Assurance system.

Over the last 20 years, the GLTAA has collaborated with the FWPA, University of Melbourne and Monash University in several research projects to develop new Glulam design concepts that were adopted in the Glulam standard and have benefited the Glulam industry.

With current trends indicating strong and increased acceptance of Glulam, it's an exciting time to be part of an association that has from its inception envisaged and worked for such a time in order to provide consumers with the confidence they need to choose Glulam.

I'm delighted to accept the invitation of the Australasian Timber editor to participate through the means of a regular column in this magazine. I look forward to sharing news in relation to the excellent and ongoing work of the GLTAA, providing a platform in which to educate about Glulam as well as showcasing some of the exciting projects around Australia which feature locally manufactured Glulam.