SUSTAINABLE TIMBER USE IN THE AUSTRALIAN HOUSING MARKET: ARE CONSUMERS WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE?

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ABSTRACT

A large proportion of traditional Australian homes contained timber floors and timber exterior cladding until the advent of the standard concrete slab/brick veneer house. Up to 95% of new homes are built by project home companies and the majority of these contain an external envelope consisting of concrete flooring, clay brick walls and concrete tile or steel sheet roofing. This design is currently driven by consumer’s expectation of low cost, durable homes that are completed within restricted time limits. There is now a price premium on bespoke housing projects that differ materially or otherwise from a limited set of designs offered by project home firms. The adoption of concrete and brick homes originated from a perceived advantage of longevity, low maintenance and thermal comfort. Innovation in wood treatments, wood protection and insulation has provided solutions to these issues so that timber is now a viable option with added benefits such as environmental sustainability and erection speed. Australian consumers have a growing awareness and desire to live in a way that is sustainable and are making choices that reflect this attitude. This has been demonstrated through the high adoption rate of recent government-supported schemes such as subsidized insulation and solar panel installation. This paper aims at investigating homeowner’s perception of timber as a sustainable building product, the desire of homeowners to use sustainable building products, and the willingness of homeowners to pay a premium to live sustainably. This paper presents the results of a questionnaire survey to homeowners in the city of Sydney, New South...