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REMILLED MESSMATE FLOORING DEFECT or DESIRABLE FEATURE?

Messmate flooring is remilled from recycled construction timbers. These were installed as green timber - structural joists, purlins or other framing members and were air-dried over the life of the building, then removed during demolition. Structural hardwoods are usually backsawn rather than quartersawn and run-of-mill rather than graded for appearance. This means the boards show crown features, irregular colour, gum lines and natural feature instead of the lineal, low-featured and uniform tones of quartersawn timber.

The construction source of recycled hardwoods will determine 'attrition' features. Purlins will have nail, screw or bolt holes; floor joists will show metal marks on one edge. Truss cords will exhibit bolt holes, notches and mortise features; ridge boards and ceiling hangers will show clusters of nail holes across the face of the board. Timber may show discolouration close to original surface intensified by oxidation and surface checking*. Black carbon staining can halo bolt or nailholes and chisel marks remain where metal fragments have been dug out.

Our grading process is not intended to eliminate these features described above unless they are excessive or affect board integrity. A high-feature or Rustic grade is regularly offered in this instance. Installation as an overlay flooring means none of these attrition features are of any detriment to the finished floor.

Displays of finished flooring and production packs are available for inspection and purchasers should inform themselves first-hand - and prior to purchase - of the nature of the product described here, as no claims will be heard in respect of grade, flaws, colour or visible defect after purchase.

* Surface checking is fine shallow furrows or fracture on the surface of air-dried board.

Messmate or mixed Stringybarks?

Recycled construction timbers are unlikely to come as pure single species batches. In practice, what is by convention called recycled messmate, has other stringybark species and minor forest species in the packs. Often Silvertop Ash, Yellow Stringybark, Blue-leaf Stringybark, Blackbutt, and Tasmanian Blue Gum occur in the mix. None of these is dissimilar in colour and all are difficult to separate.

By rights, our industry should have adopted a product name that was not species specific such as Messmate (*Eucalyptus obliqua*). At the time we were all caught up in an important movement of the early 90's - which was to put these old but unfashionable species names back on the menu for appearance-grade floors and furniture timbers, and to lay to rest the cringe euphemisms of the 30s such as *Oak* or *Ash* applied to native hardwoods. Intent on this new eucalypt nationalism, we didn't think far enough ahead - and the convention became set in concrete.