

Merchant Spotlight

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Swan Le Messurier remains at cutting edge of timber importing, wholesaling business

By JOHN HALKETT

SYDNEY: Swan Le Messurier is still at the leading edge of the timber importing and wholesaling business, says Timber and Building Materials Association on NSW chief executive Kevin Collison.

"Swans continues to be a prominent player in Sydney's timber importing and wholesaling sector. They are held in the highest regard by the industry and its customers for their ability to perform and their long contribution to the welfare of the industry," Mr Collison said.

Campbell Swan has demonstrated a long and outstanding commitment to timber importing. In addition to his commercial success, he has served the industry in a number of capacities, including as chairman of the Timber Importers Association.

"I am confident that the involvement of the Swan family will continue as Campbell's son Michael takes on an increasing amount of responsibility for the company and the affairs of the sector generally," Mr Collison said.

John Chadwick, managing director, C. S. Chadwick, said that he had been doing business with Campbell Swan since the 1970s, and like other customers had developed a strong relationship with the company.

"Swans is an honest, old school company that treats their customers straight up and down," he said. "Their business was driven by family

honour and personal ethics."

In 1932 Norman Moore joined forces with Roy Le Messurier to set up the Sydney-based timber importing and wholesaling company, Moore Le Messurier.

Fifty eight years later, history repeated itself with the establishment of a new partnership between Norman Moore's son-in-law, Campbell Swan, and Roy Le Messurier's grandson, Nick Le Messurier. The new timber importing and wholesaling company, Swan Le Messurier, continues today.

Swan Le Messurier director Michael Swan identifies the changing availability of timber traditionally handled as a challenge for the industry.

"What is here today might not be here tomorrow - and our forward business planning needs to reflect that," Michael Swan said.

"We have to be constantly aware of new and substitute products. For example, engineered wood products have been one of the big movers in the last five years. Initially, we had to battle away but their acceptance and market share has steadily increased. This trend has affected our traditional structural hardwood sales."

Pointing to perhaps a happy coincidence between the fact that traditional structural hardwood products are becoming less available and the

rise in the availability and acceptance of engineered wood products, Mr Swan says it is, none-the-less, never that straight forward. "You are not going to put LVL into exposed beams and there is still a strong desire for the more exotic timbers out there in the market place."

Mr Swan identifies the challenges in front of importing and wholesal-

ing companies like Swan Le Messurier.

"As an importer and wholesaler we have to provide a service to distinguish us from the large, fully integrated players. For instance, we carry a very wide range of species and products for our customers. That means they are able to hold much less stock than might otherwise be the case.

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Michael Swan looks over Western Australian Karri, one of the many structural hardwoods carried by Swan Le Messurier.