A BENCHMARK STUDY ON HOUSING DEFECTS IN VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

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Abstract
The construction industry consists of many small businesses employing less than five people. A challenge to the construction industry is to ensure that the many small firms and sub-contractors keep producing quality housing to meet the needs of their customers and clients. In attempts to continually improve the quality of housing various policies and mechanisms have been adopted. These have included industry sponsored quality programs and industry administered builder registrations. However, these attempts have failed because of consumer mistrust of industry-sponsored programs. In addition, these mechanisms have been introduced in isolation and not as a part of an integrated industry initiative that includes education and training from the trade to tertiary level construction management courses. This work contributes to knowledge through a detailed on-going study of housing quality and defects. This research identifies the common forms of defects, which occur in housing and their incidences. The overall aim of this paper is to report the identification of defects in housing and the establishment of benchmarks (or a baseline) for the incidence defects in various functional elements within a house. It also suggests the areas where defects are likely to occur. From the knowledge gained from the study, industry and governments may make informed decisions of where resources may be directed to the areas where it will be most beneficial both to the house builder and the end user (customer). For this to occur the findings of this research will be disseminated into the housing industry and eventually integrated into tertiary courses in building and construction management.

Keywords
Housing, quality, research, education, knowledge, training

BACKGROUND
The importance of housing in Australia is confirmed by the relatively high levels of home ownership at 70% of the housing stock (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002). The economic, social and political importance of the affordability of housing was also demonstrated when the Federal Government in Australia introduced a new Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 1999. Its imposition at a general rate of 10% had a negative impact on new house building activity and first time buyers in particular found it difficult to purchase their first home due to the increase in cost of housing (Productivity Commission 2003). So, to alleviate the problem the government introduced a first time buyer’s grant of A$7,000 to cushion the effects of the imposition of the new tax on the cost of house purchase, encourage home ownership and to maintain the general economic effect of new house building activity.