

## About Invasive Testing Using Moisture Probes

This document provides home sellers, and potential home buyers with information on invasive inspection and timber treatment testing using our timber sampling and Mdu Moisture probe methods.

Buyers need to seek the owner's permission before requesting invasive testing or timber treatment testing services.

### **Why Have Invasive Testing?**

Invasive testing is recommended for determining, to a higher level of accuracy, the true decay and moisture condition of timber framing.

Visual techniques, such as surface scanning with moisture meters or thermal imaging cameras, may detect anomalies suggesting moisture ingress. However, these miss important defects, cannot provide actual moisture readings nor show whether the moisture has caused decay. That's why, every reputable house inspector will recommend invasive testing as a follow-up to a visual inspection.

Many houses present well on the surface but have significant moisture and decay problems behind the walls. These can cost the new owner heavily in future maintenance and loss of value.

A buyer of a house with potential for moisture ingress or decay issues must, as part of their due diligence, carry out an appropriate level of invasive inspection before proceeding with the purchase.

A seller of a house, should permit potential buyers to carry out such inspection as is reasonable and prudent to satisfy themselves as to the condition of the house.

This situation often arises when the house concerned is clad with monolithic plaster, fibre-cement or EIFS (polystyrene based) cladding. These houses were often built without a cavity between the framing and the cladding, using untreated or undertreated timber, and with construction and design flaws which have the potential to leak.

In many cases, banks refuse to lend money on these houses without a high level of inspection.

*Mdu Moisture Probes allow an appropriate level of invasive testing to be carried out, at an affordable cost and without damaging the house.*

### **How do you do Invasive Testing?**

The only way to truly see if a house is leaking is to completely remove all of the cladding and gib so you can see all of the wood. That is of course never going to happen. Buyers need to accept that they can't know everything, however knowing nothing is also not acceptable. There has to be a compromise where the true condition can be established to a reasonable degree of confidence, without costing too much or damaging the house.

# Moisture Detection

When you hear the words “Invasive Testing”, you may picture unsightly cutouts with gib and cladding removed. Naturally, neither sellers nor buyers would do this unless in extreme circumstances. Our process is very different.

We drill a small (11mm diameter) hole through the skirting board, retaining the wood shavings for decay analysis. We take moisture readings from the framing itself using a probe. The probe can be left in place or we can fill the hole with filler. The owner can touch this up with paint later.

If the probe is left in place it looks like a small button on the skirting board. The moisture content can then be measured again at any time in the future.



For timber treatment testing, we remove face plates from some of the power or light sockets mounted on external walls. Through the inside of the enclosures, we drill into a stud and extract timber drillings which we test for timber treatment. The face plates are replaced and there is no external evidence that we have taken samples.

This normally provides all of the information needed at the pre-purchase stage.

Some buyers request a comprehensive moisture probe system is installed before final settlement, which provides decay and moisture data at the most likely leak risk points around the house.

## **What does the Invasive Testing tell you?**

*What if you are buying the house in the middle of summer and some of the leaks have dried out?*

*What if there was a leak in the past, which has now been fixed – but the timber is still badly decayed?*

*How do you know if the house has decay resistant timber or untreated timber?*

None of these will be reported by an inspector using visual only inspection, but our specific, targeted invasive inspection can.

We can provide verbal reports, up to detailed weathertightness inspection reports.