

# MAINTENANCE TOOL ON HORIZON

**A new BRANZ project is developing a web-based tool so designers and builders can easily give homeowners a project-specific record of the materials and finishes used and their maintenance over the life of the building.**

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**F**or several years, BRANZ has seen the need for a tool so designers and builders can provide homeowners with details of the materials used in their house and what they need to do to maintain these. The challenge has been how to make the information accessible and easy to use. Web-based tools now mean it is possible to create a tool to easily access and select precise information and save it into a specific dossier that can be printed and given to the building owner.

## Homeowners missing information they need

BRANZ has just completed the third 5-yearly house condition survey, which has again shown that, generally, New Zealand homeowners are not particularly good at maintaining their homes. Even investigations into some leaky buildings have pointed to a lack of maintenance as a contributing factor.

Maintenance is a key component of on-going Building Code compliance, but currently, building owners are given little advice on the maintenance requirements of their building – buildings are simply handed over on completion. In many cases, the only information provided is manuals covering appliance operation and any product warranties.

## Information behind *Maintain it* tool

A substantial amount of work has been done to build up a database that contains:

- elements that make up a building, for example, foundations, floor structure, wall structure, wall cladding, windows and so on
- components of each building element, for example, for a suspended floor structure, these include bearers, joists, braces and pile fixings

- possible materials and material sizes that a component may be constructed from (for example, timber for a suspended floor structure) and the sizes commonly used (for example, 140 × 45 mm or 190 × 45 mm joists), the timber treatment, steel sizes commonly used, structural steel beams if used, the subfloor fixings used and so on
- the finishes that have been applied, where applicable

- the maintenance requirements for each component material and finish, for example, for timber weatherboards, an annual wash-down and a repaint every 5–7 years, with total coating removal every 5–6 repaints.

It is envisaged that the tool will also be able to accommodate the user adding information like:

- a component, material or specific size of component not within the tool
- the brand of components used, for example, lining materials, paint, taps, carpet and so on
- specific finish colours for paints, carpets, tiles and so on.

## Tool development under way

Discussions are about to be held with developers to design a web-based tool with a series of drop-down menus that allow the user to make appropriate selections. An example of this type of tool is the popular Lintels and beams calculation tool on the BRANZ website [www.branz.co.nz](http://www.branz.co.nz).

The second phase of the project is to finalise the information that is needed to power the tool and ensuring that it has comprehensive listings of almost all available materials.

Expect to see *Maintain it* available early in 2012.

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