

trade secrets floating floors

Treads lightly

Timber and laminate can keep the strata manager off your back, writes **Matt Eaton**.

What to do with daggy floors is a vexed question for unit dwellers. Polished concrete is tricky in strata buildings because it could create noise problems. So if your personal ground zero happens to be made of concrete, the only other option used to be carpet – and how much to spend on it.

Laminates are a lot more hard-wearing than timber, but can't be buffed and polished if scratched.

In recent years, however, renovators and developers have been opting for floating-wood or laminate floors. They are quick to install, wear well and don't cost a fortune. And they can freshen up the blandest modern brick unit.

"Floating floors have spiked in the past couple of years. People used to be afraid of them, but they're getting more used to the idea now," says John Elasi, co-owner of Floormania.

Elasi says laying a solid timber floor in an apartment would be impossible, as no strata

would approve it. Which makes a floating floor the best compromise.

"In most units you need to have soundproof underlay. It's a must because if you have problems with noise, the strata managers would make you rip up [a solid timber floor]."

Be they laminate or timber, floating floors can be set down upon virtually any type of sub-floor – concrete, ceramic tiles, slate. In cases where the existing timbers don't look good enough to polish or when the aim of a renovation is for a different look, some people even lay them over existing wooden floors.

Installing the floors is relatively quick. Elasi says staff have in one day laid 80 square metres of floating timber or 130 square metres of laminate floor. That's because the process is easy. The timber comes in panels, like large planks, which are glued into tongue-and-groove joints. But the panels are not fixed to the sub-floor and the timber is pre-finished, which means no polishing and no mess.

A 10-millimetre gap is left around walls to allow for expansion, and that gap is covered by wooden beading.



Elasi says Floormania's floating wooden floors range from \$85 to \$130 a square metre.

Laminate floors start at \$50 a square metre. They are a lot more hard-wearing than timber, but can't be buffed and polished like the wood if scratches appear.

Laminate also comes in planks, and is laid the same way as floating wood floors, but without glue.

"Laminate floors are cannibalising the vinyl-flooring market," Elasi says. "We've now got about 120 colours – there are some really nice laminates out there. A lot of cafes are laying laminate floors."

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Cutting it fine ...
John, left, and
Joseph Elasi show
off their panels.

Photo:
Domino Postiglione

TRADER'S TIP Use a doormat to stop stones and grit wearing the floor. Put felt pads on furniture legs.