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Thor turns power poles to perfect floorboards

[Matthew Raggatt](#) August 16, 2014



Thor's Hammer timber recycler Sean Carmody prepares the surface of a pole in readiness for sale.

After decades of feeding electricity to homes and businesses from the streets of Queensland and NSW, the timber from old power poles has been given a new inside life thanks to a Canberra joinery.

From tallowwood to ironbarks and spotted gum, timber recycler Thor Diesendorf said the poles' long history out in the weather – which ultimately dries them – was an asset.

"It's already done what it's going to do, in terms of movement," Mr Diesendorf said.

"When timber goes from being green to dry, down to 18 per cent moisture content outside, it could shrink five to 10 per cent."

The owner of Thor's Hammer, based at the Yarralumla Brickworks, said the company has used timber from power poles for about six years, but only in recent weeks started to prepare and sell it for indoor flooring and cladding.

Mr Diesendorf said he believed it was the first in the ACT to do so, and one of only a handful nationwide, but the "experiment" had worked.

"It's super hard, you never wear it out," Mr Diesendorf said.

"And some of the marking, the cracking, people like it."

The timber, purchased from saw mills, needed to have the bolts used for climbing the poles removed, and was then kiln-dried. Bolt holes were filled with resin or timber plugs if the wood was for flooring.

The miller said the timber that had been buried in the ground was not used, and all sapwood from the outside of the pole was removed, which got rid of any chemical treatment.



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The power pole timber has come from NSW and Queensland, despite ActewAGL replacing timber power poles at the rate of about 800 to 1000 a year for the last three years.

Mr Diesendorf said removed poles from the ACT were cut down into pieces which left them less suitable.

Jerrabomberra builder Parry Pichelmann said he had been using recycled timber from Thor's Hammer – including from power poles and wharfs – for about 10 years, and praised its rustic beauty.

"When we use his timber for flooring one of the features is it's so well-seasoned, and because they've been so well weathered you get that beautiful variation in colour that comes through," Mr Pichelmann said.

The owner of Pichelmann Constructions said while he had primarily used the heavy timber for pergolas, about 80 per cent of the homes the company built had a wooden floor, and the board length which power poles offered would be ideal.

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