

November 29, 2011

## **Waffle slab warning for Melbourne's western suburbs**

Homeowners of near-new homes or people in the process of building a home in Melbourne's western suburbs are being warned about the risks associated with a particular form of foundation known as 'waffle slabs'.

Commercial Litigation lawyer Robert Auricchio from Slater & Gordon said that the firm had been contacted by a number of homeowners whose residences were 'cracking and twisting' as the foundation waffle slabs moved with the soil.

"The western suburbs of Melbourne are characterised by highly reactive soils," Mr Auricchio said.

"We've spoken to a number of experts who believe that a particular design of slab – the waffle slab – needs to be designed with adequate drainage to cope with the variable nature of soil in the western suburbs.

"In particular, it appears that slabs that were laid in recent years are shifting as a result of the wetter conditions seen in the region this year.

"As soil levels move up and down with the rain, the houses sitting on top of this particular type of slab seem to be heaving with the moves in the soil."

The waffle slabs concerned are designed as a concrete grid, with polystyrene cubes inserted into the spaces left by the concrete lining.

Mr Auricchio said a number of clients had seen their houses sustain damage as a result of this problem.

"One of my clients is unable to move into her newly built home because the slab movement has started to appear. In another case, it has resulted in cracks up and down the walls, cornices coming off ceilings and doors hanging at a different angle to the doorway that they are connected to," he said.

Mr Auricchio said that people currently building homes should consult their building company and home engineers as soon as possible.

"This waffle slab design is commonplace in the residential building industry. While it may be perfectly adequate to use in areas with higher soil stability, it is quickly becoming apparent that it may not be suitable if not properly designed for use in the western suburbs.

"For those people currently building a house, it is worthwhile asking your builder and engineers about the slab design for your house."

Mr Auricchio said that it was difficult to know how many people have been affected by the problem.

"We are anecdotally aware that there are many more people in the western suburbs who may have already been affected by this problem.

# Media Release

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“What we don’t know is how many more people are currently living in homes unaware of the problem evolving literally under their feet,” he said.

Mr Auricchio said that homeowners who feel their existing homes may be affected should seek expert advice immediately.

“Prevention and intervention are the most effective ways to deal with this problem. If somebody feels their house may be sustaining damage because of this slab design or inadequate drainage, then they should start asking questions sooner rather than later to avoid further damage and financial loss,” Mr Auricchio said.