

'Fixes-can-kill' seminar series hits raw nerve

It really hit a nerve—as the 100 who came will tell you.

We refer to the most recent ACRA seminar, *Concrete Repair—the Structural Implications*, held in Sydney, which was so successful that ACRA is already planning encores in other centres.

Varied viewpoints

Four speakers tackled the subject of a potentially fatal structural collapse from different perspectives.

Firstly, Wayne Costin of Costin Roe presented the structural engineer's perspective, **highlighting the importance of having a structural engineer review a building's structural integrity whenever concrete deterioration has the remotest potential to cause a collapse.**

Trust not reo rust

Henk Van Den Heuval from Andersal put the contractor's point of view. This was a particularly important part of the seminar because **as competent as many contractors are to carry out concrete repairs, most do not have the structural engineering expertise to determine when collapse might be a consequence of reinforcement corrosion.**

(ACRA has previously highlighted the potential for structural collapse in the now famous "Balcony Bill" campaign.)

The danger here is that when confronted with problems involving reo corrosion, **most builders, owners and engineers settle for repair by patching, which is simply not adequate in many cases.**

She'll be right?

Clearly, to avoid the serious consequences that can result from misplaced trust in "the patch", specialist expert advice is quite often an absolute necessity.

But in ACRA's experience,



PATCH A FIX, MAKE A DEATH TRAP

such expert advice is sought far too rarely.

Worth killing for?

Both Wayne and Henk quoted instances where repairs were carried out to structures that had either suffered, or were on the verge of suffering, some form of structural failure. **In one case, it was pure luck that somebody wasn't injured or killed.**

Cost-effective fix

The other two speakers were Geoff Wyett of Australasian Concrete Services and Andrew Sarkady of Degussa.

These two speakers presented information on some **alternative forms of strengthening, which can repair structures on the verge of collapse comparatively cost-effectively.**

The seminar concluded with a discussion session involving some lively debate.

Duty to warn

In particular, the issue of responsibility became something of a hot potato, as some in the room seemed not to appreciate the importance of staying alert to the clues that might give rise to a failure.

Even more importantly, some present did not appreciate that they had a **duty to warn building owners of potential risks, even if owners did not want to hear it.**

Encore

More detailed information and **copies of the speakers' presentations will soon be available through the ACRA website.**

And stay tuned for details of an **encore performance of the seminar in Melbourne in the New Year.**