

Gaping of Timber Weatherboard underlaps



We are regularly asked at MPNZA about whether to gap timber weatherboard underlaps. There is no one hard and fast answer to this question, and can depend on whether the timber weatherboard is new or existing. There are definitely positives and negatives to filling the weatherboard underlap. Our advice is currently as follows:

Existing Timber weatherboards:

Due to the movement timber weatherboards can experience through both high and low concentrations of moisture, filling the underlap can cause problems. General movement of the building, including ground movement, can also cause the weatherboard to flex and move. These problems are highlighted by the squeezing out of the gap filler from the underlap and appear as lengths of chewed gum. The timber movement can be exacerbated by the use of darker coloured paint, such as colours with a Light Reflectance Value (LRV) of less than 45 LRV. The dark colour absorbs the heat from the sun expelling moisture from the timber and contracting the weatherboard.

However, if the gap is not filled then it is likely an unaesthetically pleasing black line can be seen (the black line being the gap between the boards) which many consumers do not expect to see. The black line is not visible if the gap to the underlap is filled.

If a gap filler is to be used to fill the underlap, it should be one that is recommended by the gap filler manufacturer for the use on weatherboards. It should have the maximum elasticity possible to deal with the likely movement of the timber weatherboard. MS Silicon is often used in this instance.

It is the belief of MPNZA that painting contractors should point out the pros and cons of filling the weatherboard to the consumer/ home owner. This will provide them with the knowledge to make an informed decision of what is best for their needs. This decision should then be documented with the consumer/home owner advising the painting contractor in writing their decision prior to work commencing.

New timber weatherboards:

Most timber processors supply written advice with the new timber weatherboards as to what is recommended as far as filling of the underlap. In some instances, filling of the underlap can void the warranty of the timber weatherboard supplied by the timber processor. In these instances, the weatherboard has been designed to move, and filling the underlap restricts this movement. It is the view of MPNZA that these instructions should be followed, and the gap not filled.

When consulting AS/NZS2311:2017 guide to the painting of buildings, clause 7.3.3 Gap filling is noted. This clause advises that "*all cracks, holes, indentations and damaged surfaces should be made good as far as is practical*". Clearly filling of weatherboard underlaps is not always practical or desirable.

As can be seen by the above explanations, there is no easy answer to this question and should be left to the consumer/home owner, having been fully informed of the likely issues, to make a decision. They should then inform the painting contractor of their decision and requirements.

All preparation and painting works should be carried out in accordance with AS/NZS 2311:2017 Guide to the painting of buildings

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