

# Masswood: your new partner for glulam and finger jointing solutions

This versatile business has made strategic investments to manufacture glulam and assist in the optimisation of wood fibre. **By Chris Parker**

## BECOMING MASSWOOD

Masswood may be a business name you've not heard of before and that's understandable - this article marks the official launch of this 'new' business, that's not so new.

The Masswood brand and offering has been a long time in the making. It was in 2016 when Truett and Eva Dellow started Mezzaluna Joinery at a very small factory in Botany. "Glulam was not on our radar back then" says Eva. "It was only after being approached to manufacture some curved members for a play pod that we delved into glulam as a process". Soon after the completion of this project at the end of 2019, they, along with Eva's father Ron Gattone, launched Curvwood which saw them specialising in curved timber products.

With their eyes set on expanding and starting one of the only NSW based glulam manufacturing facilities, a move to a larger

premises was in order. With the option of much more space, the procurement of high-tech and robust machinery began. It took almost 3 years to receive all the European custom-built machinery that now stands proudly in the Masswood facility. "I did months and months of comprehensive research to find the best companies to invest our money with" says Truett. "It was important to me that we did our best to think of every possible way each machine could be utilised to its maximum potential". Eva adds, "These strategic long-term investments have culminated so we can now take on large scale glulam projects and increase our production volumes". Eva continues, "we realised the Curvwood brand would no longer accurately represent our newfound capabilities. It is our hope that in time, Masswood will be synonymous with quality, versatility and efficiency by offering exceptional products and customer service".

## WHY GLULAM?

Glued-laminated timber (glulam) has been part of Australia's construction landscape since the mid-20th century. Its adoption



GL15 beams.





The first glulam project: Curved Play Pod.

mirrored global trends, where advances in wood engineering during the early 1900s laid the groundwork for glulam's use in structural applications. In Australia, glulam initially gained traction in projects requiring long spans, such as bridges and industrial buildings, thanks to its ability to create strong, durable components from smaller timber sections. Over time, as architectural trends evolved to embrace exposed timber as a design feature, glulam has become a popular choice for both functional and aesthetic applications in residential, commercial, and public buildings.

Truett says, "When I was attempting to figure out the best solution to make curved timber members, I initially experimented with steam bending. While it was really eye opening in terms of what's possible with timber, I could see that it has its limitations". Ron adds "Glue laminating was really the best manufacturing technique we could implement for the size and scale of the members we needed to fabricate".

With the glulam market in Australia expected to experience significant growth over the next decade, driven by increased demand for sustainable construction materials and a growing preference for timber in place of steel and concrete, it's easy to understand why Masswood has made such significant investments to expand their glulam manufacturing capabilities.

### OPTIMISED OPERATIONS

Upon entering the doors at Masswood I couldn't help but feel the energy and passion, it was like electricity in the air. The premises are clean, extremely organised, safe and well maintained. The operation is fast, impressive and meticulous. It was clear that a great deal of thought had gone into layout and the manufacturing flow. Eva tells me "In order to maximise every inch of space, we just built a new mezzanine floor". I noticed the impressive 250mm x 250mm

posts were glulam. Nothing beats using your own product. The factory set up and layout is a clear testament to their vision and forward thinking for future growth. It was evident, the team is excited about the business and new strategic direction. I was made to feel very welcome; at their core they are genuine and engaging people who care a great deal about what they are doing. When I sat down to commence the interview, the time just raced by. Personally, I could have stayed all day. The machinery is impressive, and it was enjoyable to hear from each member of the team about how each machine works, adds to the overall quality and efficiency of production and why certain decisions were made during the procurement process.

### FINGER JOINTING

Masswood's continuous vertical finger jointer is massive and is different to many I have seen. Ron demonstrates how the finger jointer works, the significant force applied, and the strength achieved. Truett goes on to explain "While very much a necessity in glulam manufacturing, we also offer finger jointing as a stand-alone service. Our finger jointer can produce continuous lengths up to



Above: Continuous Finger Jointer.

24 metres with sectional sizes of 250mm x 50mm for hardwood and 250mm x 100mm for softwood. The shortest length we can work with is 630mm. This is the largest finger jointer that we know of in NSW". Prior to the timber going through the finger jointer, it's marked for defects and rolls through a moisture metre. The defects are cut out ensuring the structural integrity of the pieces that will be finger jointed. This is an important factor when it comes to the strength grade of the glulam they are working to achieve. Eva says, "We opted to upgrade to a 25-tonne pressing force to allow us to successfully work with Australian hardwoods. We sent some Blackbutt and Spotted Gum to our manufacturer in Germany, and they were so surprised about the density. We knew having a machine capable of working with some of the strongest timber in the world would be an advantage".

### PRESSING

Another striking piece of equipment is the 24m hydraulic vertical press. It literally runs along the length of the main wall, has individual hydraulic rams and has the capacity to press timber to a height of 1250mm and a depth of 250mm. "We believe it is currently one of the largest timber presses in Australia". Ron stops to point out "If somehow this wasn't enough, we could still add an additional 6m to the length, as it >>>



Above: Optimised layout for efficient production.





Above: 4-sided planer planing a beam.

is an extendable design". Truett adds, "The versatility of this machine means that along with being able to achieve long lengths, it can also be compartmentalised for mass production of shorter beams. The height is another advantage. Depending on the sectional size of the member, we can press multiple beams at one time, which speeds up production of large orders". They show me the first press they invested in, a 12m manual press which is capable of being set-up to create curves and free form shapes. "We can manufacture curved beams with a minimum radius of 1200mm" Eva adds. With these pressing options, it is hard to image what Masswood cannot do for you.

### PLANING

Masswood has two planers. The large 4-sided planer can manage heights up to 300mm and widths up to 600mm. Truett tells me, "In Europe most glulam manufacturers would have two planers, the first being for finger jointed laminates, the second for beams with large sectional sizes. With versatility front of mind, we modified our machine so it could serve both those purposes for us". Ron adds, "For example, this machine can accept timber as thin as 5mm, which is important when we are manufacturing curved members". Their second 2-sided planer can deal with a height up to 200mm and a width of 1000mm. "This extends our capacity to plane larger straight members and the sometimes-trickier curved beams" Eva adds.

### FABRICATION

Eva explained "Our Fabrication capabilities ensure glulam beams can arrive to site precisely cut, drilled, slotted, or bevelled for immediate installation". "We offer deep slots up to 600mm, holes up to 500mm and

rebating up to 50mm with intricate shaping up to 300mm thick, matching timber plugs and custom plate manufacturing if required". Eva continues "By investing in fabrication, Masswood has enhanced efficiency and precision, streamlined on-site assembly and maintained the highest standards of quality".

Eva shows me photos of recently completed custom projects to demonstrate just some of their capabilities. "Glulam provides so much flexibility, allowing us to provide straight or curved beams in various shapes and sizes to a broad customer base". Ron adds "Each project brings new and exciting challenges to solve, and every customer offers a unique opportunity to collaborate and create something exceptional". "We always endeavour to go beyond what is required to ensure we have the best glulam solution for each project" says Eva.

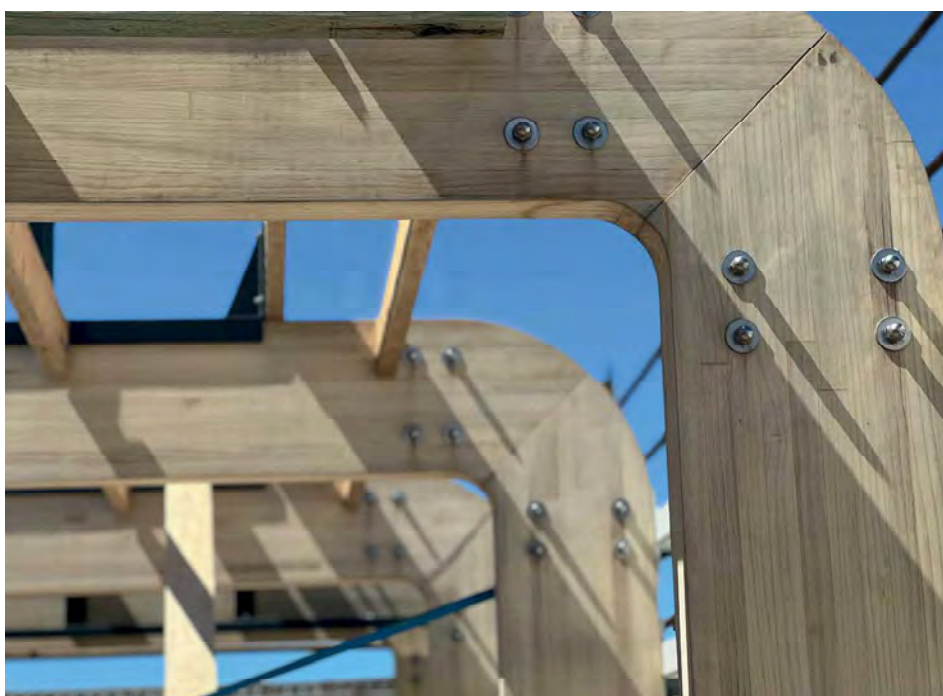
### COMPLIANT AND QUALITY MANUFACTURING

"One of the first things we did when we decided we were going to invest in glulam manufacturing was to join the Glued Laminated Timber Association of Australia (GLTAA)" says Eva. "It has been one of the best decisions we have made. To be among other manufactures who care deeply about the industry, advocate and uphold industry standards has been extremely important for our journey". Truett adds, "We are all working to the same goal, which is to grow the glulam market in Australia and replace steel and concrete with glulam where possible".

"Producing compliant and quality glulam is the most important piece of the puzzle



Above: Fabricated beams, ready for installation.



Above: Curved Accoya portal frames in Sunshine Beach QLD.



and we are currently undergoing accreditation through the GLTAA to ensure we are meeting or exceeding the Australian Standards", Eva adds.

### ONSITE TIMBER TESTING EQUIPMENT

The Easy Q delamination unit is interesting. Glulam off cuts are weighed and put inside a controlled tank. Once inside the glulam is put under the same conditions that a beam in a service class 3 environment might experience, and then some. Over a 3-hour period the glulam is soaked with water then air dried, repeating this process over and over and over again. "Once completed we are able to visually see if there has been any delamination on the glue line and assess if it's within the reasonable limits", Ron says.

Masswood also has a 4-point Bending test unit, which they use to conduct finger joint and sheer testing. "As any product manufacturer will know, testing is vital to not only comply with Standards but to discover any issues in the production line early on so they can be rectified as soon as possible", Truett adds.

"Consistently meeting and proving the GL grades for the glulam we manufacture is of the utmost importance", says Truett. Eva



**Above:** The Masswood core team from right; Eva, Truett, Ron and Declan.

adds "It's terrific to see that the industry is promoting the importance of choosing glulam that is manufactured by reputable and accredited businesses, it really helps those businesses who have invested their time and money in systems, procedures and staff training".

The team tell me they only use fibre that has FSC or PEFC certification. Eva explains "Not only is it the right thing to do, but it's also being demanded by architects, builders and end users who want a product that is truly sustainable, through and through, and so do we".





# MASSWOOD

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## FAMILY ROOTS AND BUILDING THE TEAM

The name Ron Gattone may be familiar to some of you. This Industry veteran is no stranger to Timber Trader News. Ron appeared on the front cover of issue #300 back in June 2011 and his front-page feature profile delved into his business ethos and philosophies, and his life mission remains the same "To powerfully influence in a positive way, every person I interact with". Ron tells me proudly.

Prior to becoming Managing Director at Crescent Timber and Hardware in Annandale, a role that spanned decades, he was actually a highly experienced and award-winning builder running his own building firm for close to 18 years. It was in 1991 that he was approached by his brother Danny Gattone and then brother-in-law Colin Swadling to consider partnering with them to purchase Crescent Timber and Hardware. Ron tells me "I had 3 days to decide what to do. I had been a builder for most of my life I never imagined I would change careers or close my business". With the support of his family, wife Heather and children Jeffery and Eva, he took the leap and served as Managing Director until 2021. Heather also worked at Crescent and AW Swadlings for a total of 22 years.

Ron remains invested in the industry. "I am co-owner of 'Blacktown Building Supplies, Canterbury Timber and Heritage Profiles and Mouldings". "I see glulam as a natural next step in my own timber and business building journey".

Looking for a career change, Truett began working at Crescent Timber in 2012. At this stage he was already in a relationship with Eva so had a great respect for Ron. It was not long after joining that Ron asked Truett to start working in the joinery, housed at the back of Crescent Timber. They worked



Above: Ron on the front cover of TTN #300.

together for a number of years "I learnt so much about timber, joinery techniques and how to come up with efficient and high-quality solutions during that time" says Truett. "It's fantastic to be on this journey with Ron and Eva. We all have our strengths, expertise and ways of approaching challenges, which helps propel us forward". Eva agrees, "It's wonderful to be able to build this business from the ground up with my husband and father".

Part of any business journey is finding and hiring the right team. Ron explains, "When we started looking to expand our team, I suggested we engage the NTHA. Many of the staff I employed in my time as a timber merchant were hired through the NTHA and still work in the industry today". Not long after joining the NTHA, Declan Williamson began being hosted by Masswood in 2022. Having never worked in the timber industry before, it was not long until Declan proved

himself to be an important and valued member of the team. Truett proudly points out "Declan was awarded NTHA [NSW and ACT] 2024 Trainee/ Apprentice of the year in September. He has now successfully completed Certificate III qualification in Timber and Wood Products Operations" Declan continues his employment with Masswood, advancing his journey in timber manufacturing.

During the course of my time at the factory, I observed the interactions between Ron, Truett, Eva and Declan and it became apparent to me that there is a passion and drive that is clearly obvious and a unique mix of skills and experience; with Ron's intricate understanding of building and building products, Truett's vision and unwavering drive, Eva's ability to foster strong relationships and uncover opportunities, it's these qualities that make this an adhesive and dynamic team with a strong bond – "Our integrity doesn't stop at the glue line".

## THE FUTURE IS BEAMING

Soon to be released will be their new MASSBEAM range with GL10, GL13, GL15 and GL17 glulam grades available to frame & truss manufacturers, merchants, builders and specification for architects and engineers.

The team is also doing R&D to develop hardwood glulam with another Australian based business, Crafted Hardwoods. This innovative product converts sustainably sourced, low-value pulp grade resources into premium hardwoods with the look, feel and properties of 100-year-old trees.

Part of their new offering is a range of Accoya cladding, decking and batten profiles. "Accoya is a one-of-a-kind timber, that we love working with", Ron adds.

Eva explains "It's an exciting time and a great industry to be part of". "Beyond offering environmentally friendly products, we are dedicated to a larger mission that resonates deeply with our personal values". "Together, we strive to not only meet but exceed expectations, contributing to a greener, more sustainable future".

Truett says "Glulam has so many applications – from support beams to lintels and posts, portal frames, floor and ceiling joists, facias, the options are endless".

Whilst maintaining their unique capabilities to find solutions to custom jobs, Masswood are geared up and ready to do fast, efficient, large or repetitive orders. The emphasis being they are a versatile, knowledgeable, solutions focused business-people and will certainly prove to be a reliable manufacturing partner. **T**

**For more on Masswood visit [masswood.com.au](http://masswood.com.au) or call (02) 8710 6622.**

