

FORMWORK LVL SELECTION GUIDE

How to choose the right Laminated Veneer Lumber for concrete formwork — the standard that matters, what to look for in bearers, joists, soldiers and walers, and how Big River's FormBEAM, e-form and TruForm compare.

BEARERS & JOISTS

SOLDIERS & WALERS

RESIDENTIAL · COMMERCIAL · CIVIL

00 WHAT FORMWORK LVL IS — AND WHY IT'S DIFFERENT

ENGINEERED TIMBER BUILT FOR THE POUR

Laminated Veneer Lumber is made by bonding thin timber veneers together under heat and pressure, producing a strong, straight, dimensionally consistent beam. In formwork it does the load-carrying work — used as **bearers, joists, soldiers and walers** that hold your formply and decking in place and carry the full weight of wet concrete until it cures. Unlike sawn timber, engineered LVL is predictable: consistent strength, minimal warp, and reliable spans you can design to. The right LVL means a flatter form, fewer props, cleaner soffits and more reuses; the wrong one means bowing, sag and short service life.

01 START WITH THE STANDARD: AS/NZS 4357

COMPLIANCE IS THE BASELINE, NOT THE ASPIRATION

All genuine structural formwork LVL in Australia is manufactured to **AS/NZS 4357** (Structural Laminated Veneer Lumber). On quality products the manufacturing process is **independently third-party audited and certified** — Big River's e-form and TruForm are both EWPAACertified to AS/NZS 4357. Before comparing anything else, confirm the LVL you're buying carries that certification.

CERTIFICATION IS YOUR EVIDENCE TRAIL

Formwork must be designed by a qualified engineer, and that design relies on the beam having consistent, verified structural properties. Uncertified or imported look-alikes can't guarantee that consistency — and under Australian law, if a compliance claim can't be backed with evidence, it's the installer who carries the risk. Ask for the certification and structural data, and keep it on file for the project.

02 WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR — THE CHECKLIST

EIGHT THINGS THAT DECIDE THE RIGHT BEAM

1

Load capacity & the span tables

LVL carries the full wet-concrete load. Performance comes down to the beam's grade/stiffness and its section depth — deeper beams span further and sag less. Never eyeball it: size every member to the load, span and spacing using the **manufacturer's span tables** for your design. The table is the deciding document, not a rule of thumb.

2

Deflection control

For formwork, stiffness often matters more than raw strength — too much deflection between supports puts sag and steps into your slab soffit. Size to the deflection limit in the span table, not just the strength limit.

3

THE BIG ONE FOR FORMWORK

The moisture-repellent coating

This is what separates purpose-built formwork LVL from ordinary structural LVL. Formwork lives in a wet, alkaline, corrosive environment — fresh concrete, bleed water, pour after pour. Look for a **high wax-loaded moisture-repellent coating** (Wesbeam e-form is built exactly this way). High wax loading improves dimensional stability, stops the beam drinking up water and moving, and extends service life. A light coating means swelling, bowing and a short working life.

4

Straightness & dimensional stability

The whole point of engineered LVL over sawn timber is that it's consistently straight and stays straight under load and moisture. Straight bearers and joists give a true, flat form and a clean soffit — and need fewer props and less packing to bring to level.

5

Durability / hazard treatment

Check whether the application needs a treatment level (e.g. **H2-S, H3**) for termite or moisture exposure — particularly for beams sitting in damp or ground-contact conditions, or facing long reuse cycles.

6

On-site identification & handling

A small thing that saves real time on a busy deck: FormBEAM is painted **bright orange with ends colour-coded by length**, so the crew grabs the right beam first time and cuts handling. When you're cycling forms floor to floor, fast, error-free selection adds up.

7

Reuse economics — cost per pour

Like formply, the value of good formwork LVL is realised over many pours. A well-coated, dimensionally stable beam that stays straight and resists moisture outlasts a cheaper one several times over. Judge it on **cost per use across the job**, not the price per length.

8

System compatibility & availability

Match beam depths and widths to your formply, decking and support system so everything works together, and confirm your **branch actually stocks** the sizes and lengths you need (lengths commonly run in set increments up to ~13.2m, with longer available). Ordering bearers, joists, formply and accessories from one supplier keeps the system compatible and the delivery in one drop.

QUICK RULE OF THUMB

Certification first → size off the span tables → prioritise a genuine high-wax coating for anything facing repeated pours → weigh it on cost-per-pour. Get those four right and the rest follows.

FormBEAM LVL BIG RIVER OWN-BRAND · BEARERS · JOISTS · SOLDIERS · WALERS

Big River's own formwork beam, engineered specifically for structural formwork across residential, commercial and civil work. Its signature is the **bright-orange paint with length colour-coded ends** for fast, error-free selection on site — built for efficient handling and dependable, certified performance.

Best for: everyday formwork framing where quick identification and reliable performance matter.

bigrivergroup.com.au/product/formbeam-lvl

Wesbeam e-form PREMIUM · HIGH LOAD-BEARING · DEMANDING POURS

A premium, high-load formwork LVL made from slow-grown plantation veneers — one of the **highest load-bearing formwork LVL beams in Australia**. Its standout feature is the **high wax-loaded moisture-repellent coating** for dimensional stability and long life in wet, corrosive pour environments. Manufactured to AS/NZS 4357 at Neerabup, WA; EWPAAs third-party certified.

Best for: demanding, high-reuse commercial work where load capacity and coating durability are critical.

bigrivergroup.com.au/product/e-form

TruForm LVL beams CERTIFIED · DEPENDABLE BEARER & JOIST

Structural LVL manufactured in a fully quality-controlled process to **AS/NZS 4357**, with quality independently audited and **EWPAAs product certified**. A dependable, certified formwork bearer and joist option backed by published span tables.

Best for: reliable, certified formwork framing across general residential and commercial applications.

bigrivergroup.com.au/product/truform-lvl-beams

AT A GLANCE	FORMBEAM	WESBEAM E-FORM	TRUFORM
Standard	AS/NZS 4357	AS/NZS 4357 (EWPAAs)	AS/NZS 4357 (EWPAAs)
Position	Own-brand all-rounder	Premium / highest load	Certified dependable
Standout	Orange, length colour-coded ends	High-wax moisture coating	Audited, certified quality
Reach for it when	Fast ID & everyday framing	Demanding, high-reuse pours	General certified framing

Product details (coatings, certifications, colour-coding, size ranges) are drawn from Big River's product pages. Confirm exact grade, section, treatment and current stocked lengths against your branch and the live span tables before committing a design — availability varies by depth and location.

Design to the span tables

Match every bearer, joist, soldier and waler to the actual load, span and spacing using the manufacturer's current tables — check both strength and deflection limits.

Protect the coating

The moisture-repellent coating is the beam's armour. Reseal cut ends, avoid dragging and gouging, and don't let beams sit in standing water — damage there shortens life fastest.

Store flat, dry & off the ground

Like formply, LVL should be stored flat, dry and off the ground between pours, and cleaned promptly after stripping. Correct storage is the biggest factor in how many reuses you get.

Order the whole system together

Bearers, joists, formply, decking, bracing and accessories from one supplier keeps components compatible and lands them in a single crane-truck drop when your pour needs them.

THE PROFESSIONAL'S BOTTOM LINE

CERTIFIED, CORRECTLY SIZED, WELL COATED, WELL CARED FOR

Start with AS/NZS 4357 certification, size every member off the span tables for your real load/span/spacing, prioritise a genuine high-wax moisture coating for anything facing repeated pours, and weigh it on cost-per-pour rather than price per length. Your local Big River branch can advise on grade, section, treatment and system compatibility for the specific application.



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This guide is general trade information prepared by Big River Group to help with formwork LVL selection. It does not replace project-specific engineering design. All formwork must be designed by a qualified structural engineer; always size members using the current manufacturer span tables, confirm product suitability,

certification (AS/NZS 4357) and treatment for your specific project, and retain evidence of compliance. Product specifications, sizes and stocked lengths vary by branch — contact your local Big River branch to confirm.