

FACT SHEET

YELLOWING OF LIGHT COLOURED ENAMEL PAINTS

Trade painters and home owners are often unaware that applying white or light coloured enamel or alkyd paints in the presence of a water based paint being applied at the same time, can adversely affect the colour of the alkyd paint.

Yellowing, which occurs naturally with age, can also be accelerated by the use of some household cleaners. Enamel paints are based on vegetable oils and provide a very tough, hard wearing coating for interior surfaces. This toughness is achieved through the vegetable oil component reacting with oxygen in the air, drying and hardening.

As a result of this drying process white or pale coloured enamel paints have always tended to yellow with age, particularly in situations where there is poor lighting, eg: sliding cavity doors, or inside or behind cupboards.

The Australian Paint Manufacturers' Federation recommends that if a white or pale colour enamel is being used the painter should avoid painting at times of high humidity or at very low temperatures (which adversely affect drying) and, for a period of two weeks after application of the alkyd enamel, should:

- ensure maximum ventilation;
- avoid applying water based paint in the vicinity of the new enamel work; and

- avoid using household cleaners containing high levels of ammonia. The ammonia content can usually be easily ascertained from the label on the cleaner.

Alternatively, professional advice should be sought from local paint stockists about the use of one of the new water based acrylic finishes which have a different drying mechanism to enamels and are not subject to the yellowing phenomenon.

Recommendations to Trade Painters

Trade painters should advise their clients or the builder, in advance, of the potential problems that can arise when acrylic and enamel paint systems are applied simultaneously or with a short time-frame.

Trade painters can supply their client or builder with this Fact Sheet and, if the client or builder still insists on using a dual system then they should consider obtaining a written acknowledgement that the enamel paints may consequentially yellow.

To reduce the likelihood of the enamels yellowing, always use acrylics first and then ventilate well for 24-48 hours prior to applying the enamel finishes.

Better still would be to recommend and use an all acrylic system.