



An open letter to Schools and Students re “cheap” imported treatment tables.

Dear Principal,

There are a number of reputable and well established manufacturers of massage tables in Australia who manufacture tables from Australian raw materials and who over the years have tailored their products to the needs of students and practitioners in Australia.

As Australia's longest established (over 25 years) manufacturer we would like to draw to your attention and also your students, some concerns that we have with regard to “cheap” imported massage (and other modality) tables many of which are being advertised for sale through the internet, either through auctioneers or small importers.

These imported tables are being sold by people who have no connection to the physical therapy industries in Australia and who have no objective other than making a quick dollar from unsuspecting students who have not researched the market very thoroughly.

These are some of the problems with the imported tables being sold on the internet:

1. **Quality.** They are often of very poor quality, the landed cost to the importer is generally under \$100 which is much less than even the raw material cost of a quality table made in Australia, even the cheapest of them (bear in mind that 99% of the materials in Australian made tables are sourced from Australia e.g. the timber, the plywood, the aluminium, the steel, the hinges and fittings, the vinyl, the foam are all made in Australia from Australian sourced raw materials and so they are competitively priced on the world market). The only way these cheap tables can be manufactured and sold at such low prices is to use inferior quality raw materials (and cheap unskilled labour). A table that rattles and squeaks from day one will be a constant annoyance to practitioner and patient alike.
2. **Weight.** They are often very heavy. Most Australian made tables are in the 10-15 kg range while many of these cheap imported tables weigh more than 16 kg. Some years ago OHSA (Occupational Health and Safety Standards – Australia) recommended that most people should not regularly carry loads greater than 15 kg many of these imported tables fall well outside this recommendation.
3. **Warranty.** The cheap tables often have little if any warranty. If you read the fine print on many of the auction sites on the web you will see that the table is only guaranteed for 2 months (or less in some cases). The other problem is that in some instances we have heard that an auction house who sold a defective table with no warranty referred their customer to the manufacturer in China for a warranty claim! Even if the overseas manufacturer spoke English (unlikely), and agreed to repair the table (also unlikely), the cost of sending the table overseas or trying to arrange some local repair would be prohibitive. Compare these arrangements with our own for example, where Centurion tables are guaranteed for life as far as

the main structural elements are concerned (the legs, the frame and the plywood), and all other components (excluding the vinyl which is covered by a separate manufactures warranty) are unconditionally guaranteed for 10 years. We also provide free service for 10 years!

4. **Public liability problems.** All Australian manufacturers are required to have product liability insurance. Auction houses are able to avoid this requirement. It is doubtful that these cheap imported tables being sold through auctioneers would have any type of product or public liability protection and if a patient was injured as a result of a collapsing table then the practitioner may be personally sued for damages. The small print on many auction sites specifically transfers any liability through to the manufacturerbut the manufacturer is a back yard affair in China, and doesn't speak English. I think it is easy to see the type of problem that could potentially arise in this situation.

5. **Bad advice.** The importers and auctioneers selling these cheap tables have no real knowledge of the Australian industry and the real needs of students and practitioners. This lack of knowledge is likely to result in them recommending a table that will not suit the real needs of the student or practitioner. As an example, some of the imported height adjustable tables have a very limited range of adjustments designed for smaller physiques than most Australian practitioners, (some with only 3 height settings compared with 8 on our own tables). These inferior products are sold on the basis of price alone, to the unsuspecting purchaser. The Australian manufacturers have the knowledge borne out of working for years with students and teachers (as well as practitioners) to develop tables for the Australian market (and have stood the test of time). The Australian manufacturers are working on the basis of correctly addressing needs and maintaining an on-going relationship with their customers as their career progresses. They would only damage their own future if they approached a potential sale from the quick dollar perspective. Conversely, the auction houses have no incentive to maintain any form of customer relationship.

Our company has been committed to the Australian physical treatment industry for more than 25 years and we are sending you this letter so that you and your students can be better informed of some of the pitfalls for the unwary in purchasing cheap imported tables. In the last 6 months the number being advertised on Australian web sites like eBay has gone from a trickle to hundreds. We hope this letter will at least help you and your students make better informed decisions.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen L Falkiner

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Director

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