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fabulous prefabs

Words Marg Hearn

A prefabricated building — one that is constructed mostly in a factory off-site — offers homeowners a definite cost structure and a known

timeframe that is faster than on-site traditional building methods. The process is often more cost-effective and has become increasingly popular, as can be seen in the expanded and innovative range of prefab solutions that have recently become available in Australia.

It is now much easier to get an extension out the back or on top, a studio, a new permanent or holiday home (budget through to high-end), an eco tourism or multi-residential apartment development.

Common elements include sustainable construction methods, waste minimisation, low transport miles, eco-friendly materials, minimal site impact, orientation for northern aspect, natural light, shade, cross ventilation, and effective use of space.

Here's a collection of 25 thoroughly considered, well-designed, contemporary and sustainable building options for every possible need, and some ways to help you create that very important shortlist.



Prefab pointers

Space — What do you need the space for? How much space do you need? Will those needs change down the track?

Relocatable — Do you need a solution that can be easily moved and transported later?

Detached or add-on — Do you want a stand-alone module or a solution that can be added to the rear of your home or as a first-floor extension?

Growth — Can you add on modules? How easy or complex is that?

Access — Does your location or site have special access issues?

Permits and approvals — What paperwork is

required, who is responsible, how long will that take?

Local environment — Does the location require any special ratings or materials to guard against potential cyclone, flood, fire or termite activity?

Customisable — Does an existing floorplan suit or would you like that customised?

Design — Is there access to an in-house or external architect or interior design service?

Compliance — Who is responsible for the construction and will it meet the necessary regulations?

Sustainability — How sustainable is the factory, the materials and finishes used and are further measures related to energy and water an option?

Timelines — What stages can you expect and when?

Expectations — What will it look like when it arrives on-site: a whole module or as flat-pack components? What fittings and fixtures are included, who facilitates connection to services?

Dollars — What level of spec do you want — affordable, luxury or in between? How much should you allow for transport costs? What are the running costs?

Looks — Which interior and exterior design appeals to you visually?

Communication — Is information readily provided? It's always of value to view several completed projects and speak to past clients.



ARCHIBLOX is an architect-designed, prefabricated solution that's tailored to suit individual sites, environments and lifestyles — beachside, rural and urban — Australia-wide. A collaboration between architect Bill McCorkell and builder Dave Martin, Archiblox designs, builds and delivers complete modular homes, ready for occupation, within 12 to 28 weeks. Each home has the potential to achieve an eight-star energy rating or greater through the interplay of space, form and detail. Archiblox can be utilised as an extension or addition to an existing home, a single- or multi-residential project, eco resort, office or educational dwelling, or a swish multi-purpose backyard studio. archiblox.com.au

- 1 Nautilus Avenue house by Archiblox
- 2 The Esplanade house by Archiblox
- 3 Sorrento house by Archiblox



ECOLIV buildings, designed by Beaumont Concepts, are modular prefabricated homes constructed in the company's sustainable factory in Wonthaggi, Victoria. Ecoliv has a range of standard module configurations or custom designs, available Australia-wide, to suit various site and living requirements. Standard inclusions in the seven-star-rated design is a 10,000-litre rainwater tank, 1.72kW solar power unit, solar hot water, energy-efficient lighting, electricity usage meter, water-saving plumbing, double-glazed windows, sustainably sourced timbers, cladding and joinery finished with Australian-made VOC-free Ecolour paint. Ecoliv isn't just prefabricated, it is totally focused on sustainable prefabricated homes from conception to construction. With lightweight construction and a small environmental footprint, each home is delivered on site within 14 weeks. ecoliv.com.au

- 4 San Remo house by Ecoliv
- 5a Ventnor house by Ecoliv
- 5b Ventnor house interior by Ecoliv





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ECOSHELTA is made from marine-grade structural aluminium alloy framing that is stronger but lighter than steel. Designed by architect Stephen Sainsbury and manufactured by Wonders Building Company Pty Ltd, Ecoshelta has been used for backyard studios, holiday or residential homes, emergency relief housing, remote-area research stations, walking lodges, ecotourism resorts, ultra-remote housing and cliff-face construction during the past 20 years. Sustainable design measures include an EcoCost environmental impact evaluation system analysis; a high level of wool insulation for all floors, walls and ceiling panels; plantation timber, recycled PET composite timber substitutes or ECOply and passive solar and natural ventilation design. Ecoshelta is fully modular, extremely strong and robust. ecoshelta.com

6 West End Beach house deck by Ecoshelta. Photography by Tim Dub
7 Hong Kong garden pavilion e.pod by Ecoshelta



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HUF HAUS, headquartered in Germany, has been involved in the design and manufacture of prefabricated houses since the 1960s. Defining the brand today is the visible timber frame, use of a highly efficient thermal insulation layer, frameless floor-to-ceiling glazing (triple-glazed), rooms flooded with natural light, spacious living, and enduring clarity of form. Components of a Huf Haus emerge from a state-of-the-art production line and are assembled to create very individual house designs.

Semi-automated prefabrication and pre-assembly of the components results in a quality standard regarded as superior to manual on-site assembly. huf-haus.com

8 Bungalow-style house by Huf Haus
9 Art 9 house by Huf Haus

HAPPY HAUS arrives fully decked out internally and externally in about six to eight weeks.

Architect-designed, there are currently five ranges on offer, each by a leading Australian architecture practice in partnership with southeast Queensland-based Hutchinson Builders. Available Australia-wide, Happy Haus is a new home or extension option and can also be used for myriad bespoke commercial applications, such as sales offices. happyhaus.com.au

10 A Happy Haus project
11 Inside a Happy Haus prefab



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ICHIJO Technological Homes has been renowned in the Japanese marketplace for 35 years. At a centralised factory, high-volume production of technically advanced, quality homes at an affordable price is possible. The company manufactures more than 10,000 homes each year, supplying Japan, the US and now Australia. Ichijo manufactures its own ceramic tiles to create a distinctive exterior finish, as well as external doors and double-glazed argon gas-filled windows exclusively for its homes. According to the makers, the homes reduce heating and cooling loads by up to 40 to 60 per cent, and incorporate a system that vastly improves air quality. ichijo.com.au

12 Lagon house by Ichijo
13 Harmony space by Kenjo

KENJO System AB, in Sweden, is highly versatile. The Harmony prefab is built entirely from Swedish spruce, a local and renewable resource. Foldable glass sliding door systems set in aluminium profiles reinforce Kent Johansson's design intent of an openness in look, feel and use, whether for offices, saunas, pool houses, or perhaps a floating guest house or thinking room. The options are unlimited as the module system uses different-sized glulam frames, different wall sections and roofs. Energy-efficient, customisable, connectable and extendable, Harmony is attracting global interest. There's a choice of DIY assembly on delivery; supply fully assembled; or built on site by Kenjo carpenters. kenjo.se



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INTERMODE homes are at the higher end of the modular sector in Australia. A 1.2m x 1.2m grid is used to customise each home design to suit the individual needs of a client and their site. Designs maximise passive solar performance and feature eaves, concrete floors for thermal mass, full-height double glazing, along with recycled or renewable plantation timber. The residence arrives on site as components during a 20-week program, and local labour means no long-haul transportation. Scalable to suit rural and coastal houses, winery accommodation or resorts. Voted #1 *Grand Designs Australia* home, second series. intermode.com.au

14 Kilmore residence by Intermode
15 Emerald residence by Intermode
16 Kyneton residence by Intermode



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KLIK is designed by Elenberg Fraser architects and manufactured by Unitised Building Australia in Melbourne. Its aim is to provide developers and architects with a tool to help them realise their prefabricated goals. Best suited to multi-residential developments, the Klik product range is available Australia-wide and includes low- to mid-rise residential, super towers and hotels, as well as housing. The complete package, Klik is a pre-engineered, pre-designed and pre-assembled solution. It takes 20 days on average per module, from design sign-off to completion of the module in the factory. Klik offers a raft of green benefits, including reduced material requirements and increased material recyclability. There's less wastage, water usage, transport energy and embodied energy over the lifecycle of the building, and a reduced carbon footprint. klikaustralia.com.au

17 Residential house by KLIK

LV SERIES, designed and manufactured by Rocio Romero, includes the LV, LVL, LVM and LVG, as well as exclusive add-on modules which are custom connections and include the LVC (courtyard), the LVT (tower), and the LV2 (two storey). They feature prefabricated systems as well as deep wall and roof cavities containing high levels of insulation to achieve very high R-values. They are bathed in natural light and well ventilated, and water catchment systems can be integrated with ease. A design service is available to assist customisation, whether that's reconfiguring an interior layout or combining and stacking LV models. Initially conceived for vacation homes, the LV Series is used as a permanent abode for many. Supplied flat-packed, the LV Series can be shipped to Australia. rociromero.com

18 LV Series house in West Virginia by Rocio Romero. Photography by Justin.



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MODSCAPE modules arrive on site, fully completed with the lot. That includes flooring, painting, tiling, appliances, window furnishings, decks, lighting, heating and cooling, joinery and shelving. They are designed and manufactured by Modscape in Brooklyn, Melbourne, with an emphasis on architecture and sustainability to create a holistic solution for any site or application. Modules are individually customised to suit the site, space and design requirements of each client. Features include recycled or reconstituted materials, high thermal-rating insulation, solar hot water, double-glazed windows and doors, and LED lighting. Modscape's architect-designed, prefabricated modular building solutions offer unlimited scope and possibility for design outcomes. The average timeframe, from design sign-off to obtaining the building permit and, finally, fruition, is 12 weeks. modscape.com.au

19 Aireys Inlet project by Modscape
20 South Yarra project by Modscape



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PREBUILT is a design collaboration between the Kilsyth Melbourne-based company's in-house design team, external architects and interior designers. Each of the six houses in the range can be oriented to maximise natural light and cross ventilation, coupled with double glazing and high insulation as standard. Structures are constructed from locally sourced products and materials so factory waste is minimised. Prebuilt designs are transported Australia-wide as whole modules complete with kitchens, bathrooms and joinery, fully plumbed and wired, ready to connect directly to services. Set aside eight to 12 weeks' build time post planning approval from your local council. prebuilt.com.au

21 Mod house by Prebuilt
22 Freedom house by Prebuilt



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POTEET ARCHITECTS jumped at the chance when its client asked for a guesthouse made from an old shipping container. Fitted with a custom-designed bathroom, the container was transformed into a second living space that doubles as an art studio and garden storage. One of the key elements of the project was to use as many sustainable resources as possible. The interior was sprayed with foam for insulation and then lined with bamboo plywood. The container "floats" on top of a foundation of recycled telephone poles and the deck is made from HVAC equipment pads, created from recycled plastic bottles. poteetarchitects.com

23 Container guest house by Poteet Architects. Photography by Chris Cooper



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TRANSPORTABLE SPACE is available in five different sizes (10m² to 32m²). Designed and manufactured by Pluscreate in Melbourne, modules are delivered flat-packed around eight weeks after design sign-off. Parts can be carried through a standard doorway and assembled without tradespeople. Height-adjustable legs avoid the need for excavation. The butterfly roof with box gutter provides excellent water catchment for water tanks, and there is a choice of window and door placement with optional skylights and decks. Its well-insulated PIR wall panels and steel components are recyclable. Available Australia-wide and cyclone-rated, application is unlimited. ts1now.com.au

24 Transportable Space (TS1) external office by Pluscreate

CONTAINER HOMES has an easy solution to prefabs: pre-packaged is best. Available in two sizes, Container Homes offers shipping container spaces that are ready to be lived in almost immediately after they arrive on site; only the plumbing and electricity need to be hooked up. Each home comes cyclone- and storm-proof, and has solar power for lighting. These containers don't miss out on anything, each with its own kitchen and designated living spaces, and arrive filled with furniture. containerhomes.net.au **HD**

25 An external view of a Container Homes project