



THE PREFAB IS BACK IN VOGUE

Catherine Nikas-Boulos discovers why there has been a revival in prebuilt houses, studios and office space

Prefab housing has come a long way. Once only seen on the back of a truck cruising down the highway, the prefab designer module is making a comeback.

Architect Bill McCorkell is passionate about the benefits of prefabrication construction and, with builder David Martin, has launched the Backyard Room.

This was created to cater to the many people with home offices or those who simply crave more space.

“Whether people are working from home, starting their own business or doing creative projects, we know the importance of having a space that is removed from the hustle and bustle of the family home,” Bill says.

Backyard Room offers stylish structures that are fully prefabricated. This means a backyard studio is delivered within a four-week turnaround and clients avoid the fuss of construction in their yard.

“For more difficult sites, the backyard room arrives in a flat pack and we install it onsite in under four days,” says David.

Each of these garden studios are designed to fit any backyard, whether a single-fronted terrace or a large open garden.

Built off-site, Backyard Rooms come in a range of designs, sizes and prices. The compact WorkPad is 2.2m x 2.4m and starts at \$15,840, while the BYR3 is 6.9m x 3.3m and starts at \$68,000.

In addition, clients can custom design their own backyard room using the company’s online BUILD.IT tool, an easy step-by-step process which shows the associated costs as elements are added.

ECO FRIENDLY SOLUTION

ARKit director Craig Chatman says the concept of plonking a dated design on a block is simply erroneous.

His architecturally designed prefabrication homes are not only visually stunning, but also environmentally friendly.

He says the factory-assembled



components provide greater quality assurance and can be flat packed for easy delivery, saving on transportation costs.

“Another option is volumetric build assembling, where the building including tiles, painting, kitchen installation — basically everything — is put together in the factory and delivered to you.”

Crag says attitudes are slowly changing about prefabrication.

“Historically, we have always been a prefab nation,” he says. “During the Gold Rush era cottages were imported from Singapore to cope with the boom, and then the market was written by the engineers in response to demand for prefab. Now we’re starting to see an architectural response to energy consumption and sustainability.”

As a board member of the newly-formed Prefab AUS group, he says the market is slowly changing to better understand the integrity of prefabricated construction.

Costs vary widely, but an ARKit 3m x 3m studio building costs from \$25,000 [high specification], a 10m x 5m addition costs from \$130,000 and a three-bedroom new residence from \$250,000. home.catherine.nikas@news.com.au

More ARKit, arkit.com.au; Backyard Room, backyardroom.com.au; PrefabAUS, Sarah Backhouse, sarah@prefabaus.org.au



A prefabricated studio by Backyard Room (above); an ARKit Think Tank module (left) and an ARKit prefab being hoisted into place.