



## SMARTER SMALL HOME

A creative and affordable housing solution.

Over eighteen months ago, something quite unusual was unveiled before a collection of Australian developers in an empty aircraft hangar near Brisbane Airport. It was a new type of affordable housing solution called The Smarter Small Home™ – a highly liveable and sustainable home designed to be sold as part of a house and land package for around \$300,000.

The Smarter Small Home was instigated by Kevin Doodney, a thirty-year veteran of the property and real estate industry. He spent years looking at the housing affordability problem in Australia and The Smarter Small Home is the affordable concept home that was the result of his vision and chutzpah. While Kevin was the catalyst for the project, the result is the product of an entire team. Spearheading the design smarts was designer Brett Blacklow.

With land often representing at least half the total cost of a home and land package, the pair knew a small lot size was crucial. They decided on a lot size of 10 m × 30 m; the challenge then was to design a liveable, sustainable and affordable home on it.

For Brett, the affordability of the house would come down to cost-effective construction. Brett began by looking for a number of key economical materials first and then designed the structure of the house and the floor plate around them. This approach means the design of rooms, heights and walls are to the size of materials available, and any offcuts that are generated are reused elsewhere in the design. This also helps minimize waste.

Secondly, Brett looked at ways to speed up the construction process. The solution involved products that could be installed and simply finished, involving the least number of construction layers. “Many of James Hardie’s products are sheet products and so a carpenter can cover an area of three square metres in ten minutes,” Brett says. After installation, they usually just need to be painted.

Thirdly, the key driver of the affordability of a development versus that of a single home is building the exact same floor plan. “When we’re doing this we want to make the outside of these homes look as different as possible, while still being essentially the same,” says Brett. “The thing

I’d say about these (James Hardie) products is that you can give me one standard flat sheet like HardieFlex™, and I can give you five or six different finishes. These products just have a bucketload of flexibility at a really affordable price,” he says. After researching exterior cladding materials, Brett and the team concluded that there is “nothing that can touch a few of the James Hardie products price-wise.”

### Branching out

Of course, the idea of a small home isn’t new but the combination of a small lot, small home, smart choice of materials and an efficient construction method immediately caught the attention of developers and builders and caused a surge of interest that couldn’t be immediately satisfied. However, since its launch, The Smarter Small Home has promoted industry innovators – from builders and developers to designers – to take action and now a number of Smarter Small Home-type developments have started to take off around the country.

Two brothers in the Sunshine Coast building business, the Thompson Building Group, thought the concept worked especially

well for them. “With block sizes reducing to three hundred and four hundred square metres, we could see this (kind of product) was the way of the future,” says director Brendan Thompson.

“It’s basically the beach home from thirty years ago, but modernized and designed for the future,” he says. His brother Brad Thompson adds, “When you say it’s 150 or 160 square metres, people are expecting a box. But when you look at the design, you’ll see it’s a really nice home.”

“We don’t believe we’ve got any competition in this market at the moment. You’ve got your brick-and-tiles builders, but this is architecturally designed using all the new James Hardie products. It’s all lightweight, environmentally friendly and reduces the carbon footprint.”

Similarly, when Met Developments’ architect Joe Evans first saw The Smarter Small Home, he “just loved it.”

Joe was able to prove that a home can be sustainable and affordable. “Because the government brought in new legislation for five-star minimum, and then in five years’ time they’ll push it to six-star, there’s quite a lot of issues within the development

industry about it pushing up the price of developing, making it more unaffordable,” Joe says. “But then on the flip side, we’ve done this development, which has an average price of \$322,000 and it’s not five-star, it’s six-star – five years ahead of what’s required and affordable.”

Visit [www.smartersmallhome.com.au](http://www.smartersmallhome.com.au) for further information.



James Hardie CustomerLink  
13 11 03  
[info@jameshardie.com.au](mailto:info@jameshardie.com.au)  
[www.scyon.com.au](http://www.scyon.com.au)