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**DESIGNER
MODULAR HOMES**
Increase your living space

Victorian revival

Modern functionality meets heritage charm

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RIGHT

Embrace minimalist, sustainable living through thoughtfully designed homes, such as this compact dwelling, Nesst by Fool Design. fooldesign.com.au

EXPAND YOUR HORIZON

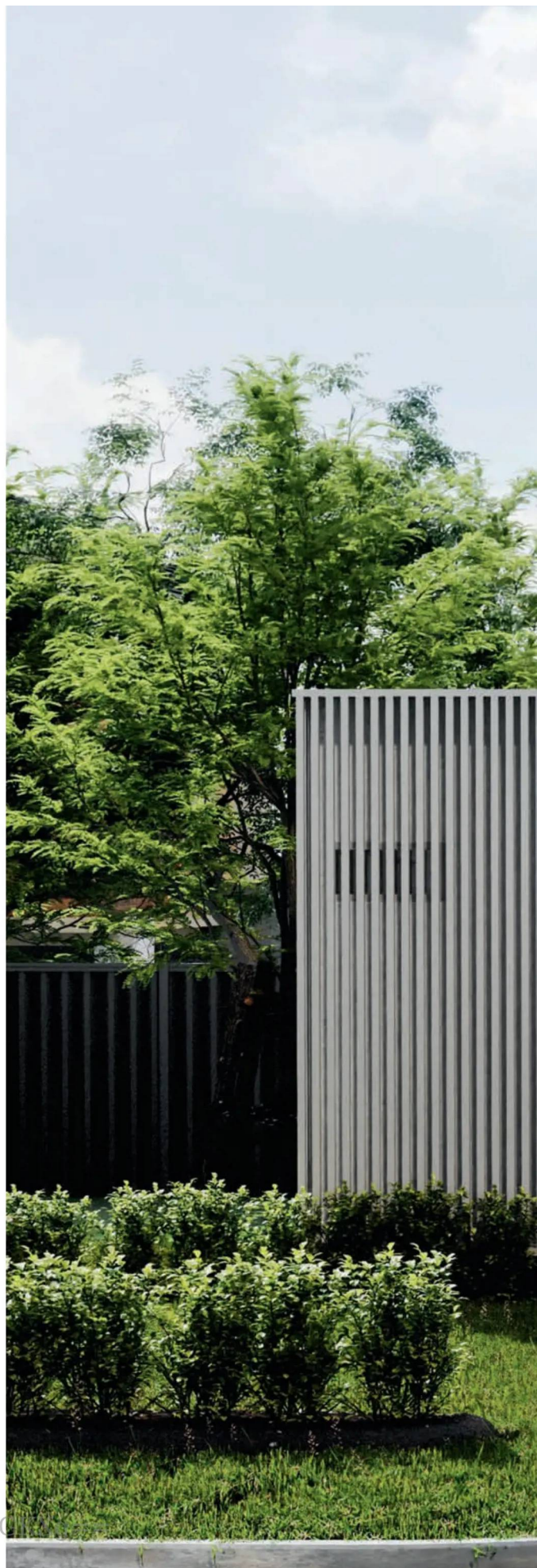
Increase your living space with these inspirational designer modular home options

WORDS KYLIE BARACZ

Around the country, homeowners are choosing to enhance what they have and increase their living spaces. Whether due to the cost of living or to improve their lifestyle, modular homes and backyard studios are becoming common additions to many residential properties.

“House prices are soaring and owning a house is becoming more difficult for many Australians,” says Wally Gebrael, director of Granny Flat Solutions. “The second dwelling (granny flat) was born as an alternative solution to making home ownership more achievable.”

Modular and prefabricated structures offer flexibility, style and affordability and come in various options suited to your family. We look at the best designer modular solutions, from tiny homes to multifunctional spaces.





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FEATURE

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“They offer an affordable, adaptable solution to changing family and lifestyle needs.”

Jeff Fink, project manager at JT Homes



LEFT

Tiny homes can provide a blend of functionality, eco-friendliness and affordability. focldesign.com.au

BELOW

A modular home, such as this one from JT Homes, can increase your property's value, while also providing a diverse living space. jthomes.com.au

Why modular living is on the rise

The exponential shift towards modular homes may be due to cost efficiency, sustainability, and quick construction timelines. They can solve space issues without extensive renovations and are highly versatile.

Lina Ritonga, director of Focl Design, says adding a second dwelling can bring privacy and peace to larger or multi-generational families. “More and more families are embracing multi-generational living. With the cost of housing, we’re seeing kids staying home longer to save for their own place, and having that second dwelling offers everyone a bit of breathing room,” says Lina. “Plus, with recent council changes making it easier to rent out secondary dwellings, it’s a fantastic option for homeowners to earn some extra income.”

Modular homes can be used for endless purposes, including home offices, salons, creative studios, teenage retreats and extended living spaces. Some are also used as rentals or Airbnb locations for added income. “They also serve as comfortable, independent living spaces for elderly relatives, allowing families to stay connected while providing privacy,” says Jeff Fink, project manager at JT Homes. “They offer an affordable, adaptable solution to changing family and lifestyle needs.”

Rachel Briggs, director of JMB Modular Buildings, says a second dwelling can be an alternative to renovating or extending your primary residence. “No one loves living through a renovation — the noise and dirt, trades traipsing through their home, it’s not a fun experience,” she says. “Our modular dwellings are built off-site in a factory and are delivered to your property 95 per cent complete. They are then craned into position, hooked up to all required services, and completed within one to two weeks. So you avoid all the noise and mess.”

FEATURE

DESIGNER MODULAR HOMES



ABOVE

An office pod such as this one from PennyGranny can give work-from-home employees or small business owners a space to work away from their home. pennygranny.com.au

Advantages of building a designer modular home

Modular homes have endless uses, from a home office or gym to a complete four-bedroom home or granny flat. Wally Gebrael, director of Granny Flat Solutions, says the benefits of a modular home include:

- An exceptional investment return, with second dwellings typically paying themselves off within five to seven years if rented out
- Added value and capital growth to the main property
- Affordable accommodation solutions, particularly in an economy where there is a lack of housing supply
- Tiny homes can be relocated, so you can take your home with you if you decide to move

Backyard studios and home offices

Gone are the days of working full-time in an office. These days, many of us work from home, at least for some of the week, which means we've needed to create a functional workspace with minimal distractions (if possible!). Those who have the luxury of space have created backyard studios, he/she-sheds or home offices that sit away from their home to keep work and home life as separate as possible.

"The shift towards hybrid work has fuelled demand for extra space. With more people working remotely, the need for dedicated home offices is stronger than ever," says Michael Doubinski, former founder of Hotels Combined and Product Review and owner of PennyGranny. "An office pod is a way to have a separate office space on your property and makes having a home office more accessible."

Rachel notes that if you move your business into the office pod or close your business, you don't have to stress about what to do with the space. "If your business doesn't go as planned, you can sell off your modular studio and recoup your costs," she suggests. "Or if your business goes better than expected and you take the plunge and buy/rent a commercial space, you can rent or sell off your modular studio for extra income."



ABOVE & RIGHT

Granny flat designs have come a long way from the bland, outdated boxes that once graced Aussie backyards. pennygranny.com.au

Flexible living: Tiny homes, PODs and prefabs

With mortgage rates rising, many families have opted to add a tiny home, POD, or prefabricated guest space to their homes as an additional living space. These designer spaces can be used as guest accommodation, Airbnb rentals, or a pool house or music room.

“People are putting a lot of thought into their tiny homes,” says Lina. “High-quality finishes are a must, and we’re seeing a big focus on creating designs that truly complement the main home. These aren’t just add-ons; they’re stylish, intentional spaces that blend beautifully with the primary residence.”

Wally says functional storage such as fold-out tables, under-bed drawers and ceiling-high cabinets can optimise the limited space in tiny homes.



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ABOVE & BELOW

Granny flats, such as this one from Granny Flat Solutions, can blend seamlessly into your garden using complementary aesthetics to your home's facade and surroundings. grannyflatsolutions.com.au



Kit homes and granny flats

Forget the old, tired granny flat hidden at the back. These designer homes are not only beautiful, they're also ideal for multigenerational living or as a rental income source. "In recent times, people have been wanting higher-end finishes in their modular homes," says Rachel. "Gone are the days where 'transportables' and 'portables' are cheap and nasty. Our latest projects have featured polished concrete floors and feature bricks and claddings. In most cases, you can achieve the same look and feel in a modular home as you can in a traditional home."

The benefits of both granny flats and kit homes are that they are affordable, have flexibility when it comes to customisation and fast construction. "While our Rezicast system can be used for granny flats, most of the demand we see is for four-bedroom, two-bathroom houses," says Zoe Piper, CEO of Rezicast Systems and executive business manager of Precast Homes. "Using precast concrete means the houses we build reach lock-up in just 10 days, with a total construction time of 10 weeks for a single-storey four-bedroom home. Timelines for granny flats are even shorter."

RIGHT

Precast homes, such as this REZICAST system, use precast concrete panels to create a strong home design, while saving on build time.

rezicastsystems.com

Expanding your outdoor space

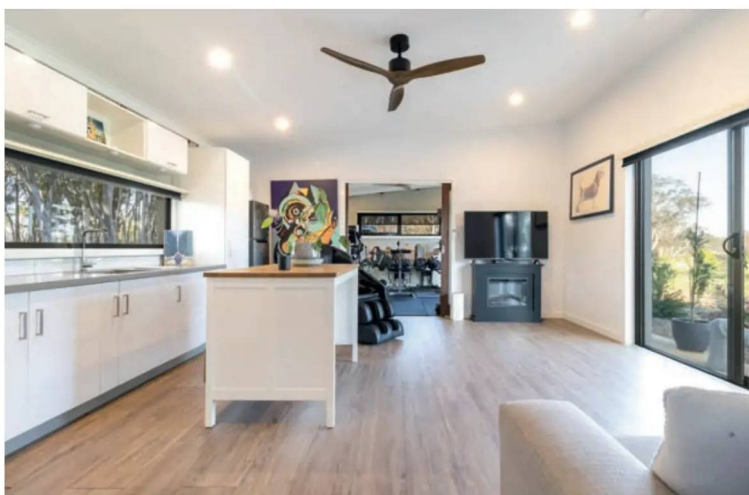
Modular structures can also extend outdoor living and add play to what may have been an overgrown, unused space. Pool houses, yoga studios, art studios and home gyms can be easily added to a residence by using a modular structure that can blend naturally into the surrounding landscape and elevate your backyard experience.

Unlimited creativity is available when it comes to creating a multifunctional outdoor space using innovative modular solutions that add value to your home. “The selection of external colours, materials and finishes will be key here,” says Zoe. “You’ll want to go with choices that complement both the main dwelling as well as the surrounding landscape. Where you situate the second dwelling, along with the pathways and connections to the main dwelling, will also have a big impact on how well it sits in the landscape.”

Lina agrees and says it’s all about harmony, matching materials and design elements of the second dwelling to the main property. “If you’re going for an off-the-shelf design, aim for neutral styles so it can complement your existing home regardless of style,” she advises. “It keeps everything feeling cohesive and polished.”

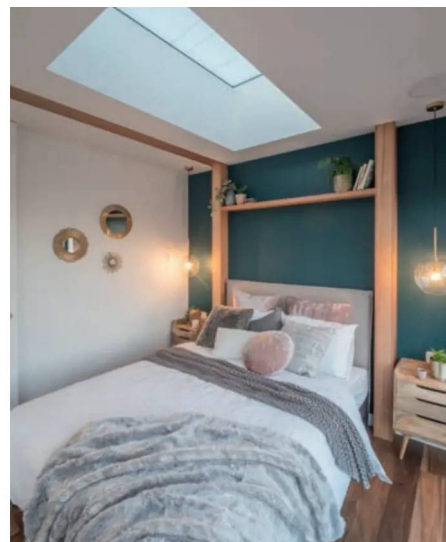
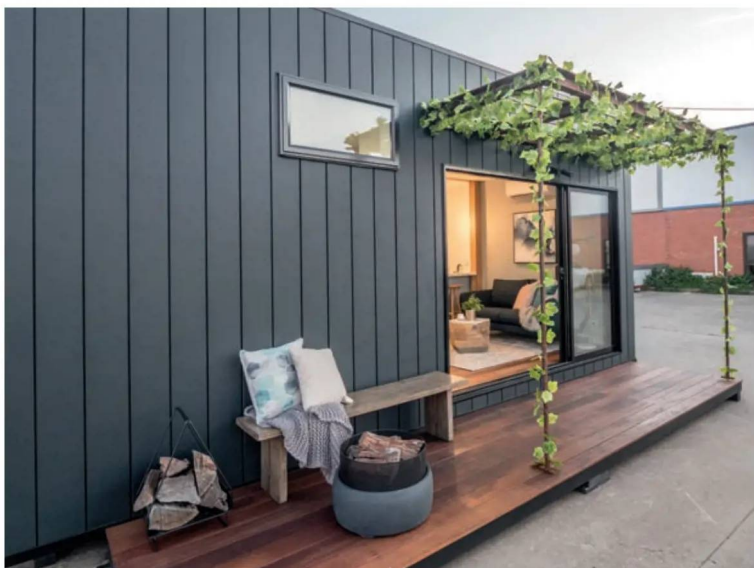
Wally recommends using native plants, natural boundaries such as hedges and shrubs, and water features such as a pond to blend the home into its surrounding landscape. Tiny homes and granny flats which include elements such as decks, balconies or even retractable walls are becoming popular. They create a sense of space without increasing the home’s footprint.

“To make small spaces feel larger and more inviting, large windows, skylights and glass doors are common, improving the ambience and also promoting energy savings with natural light,” he says. “Position the structure to take advantage of natural light, especially north-facing in the Southern Hemisphere, to ensure warmth and energy efficiency.”



FEATURE

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ABOVE & BELOW

A modular home can create independent living and space for family members, while still keeping them close by. jmbmodularbuildings.com.au



Unique ways to use your modular home

Michael Doubinski, former founder of Hotels Combined and Product Review and owner of PennyGranny, has seen his clients use their second dwellings in unique ways, including:

- A sensory room for a child with disabilities
 - A temporary home after the family's main property was lost during a natural disaster, and they are waiting for insurance payouts to rebuild
- "We've found many home insurers now cover the cost of PennyGranny portable units," says Michael.

Sustainable modular features

Modular homes are moving towards becoming eco-friendly and sustainable. By including building materials and energy-saving features, they can reduce the build's environmental footprint and energy costs.

"We're noticing a trend towards highly customisable, functional spaces with a focus on minimalist aesthetics and sustainability," says Jeff. "JT Homes prioritises sustainability by incorporating solar panels, rainwater tanks and energy-efficient windows."

Other sustainable features used by modular builders include:

- Energy-efficient appliances
- Seven-star energy rating designs
- In-house cut light gauge steel frames
- Low-VOC finishes to ensure healthier air quality
- Sustainable building materials such as bamboo or reclaimed timber
- Off-grid energy and waste disposal
- Permeable paving
- Swales and bio-swales
- Off-site construction, reducing construction waste by up to 90 per cent
- Low-maintenance, lightweight Equitone panels offering UV, fire and moisture resistance for up to 50 years
- Thermoseal packing with lightweight polystyrene infill panels
- Precast concrete panels with higher energy efficiency, including SmartCrete CRC, which is heading towards net zero concrete 🌱