

Could prefab homes be the solution to the housing crisis?



Vanessa Crump was shocked by how quickly her son built her prefab home. Photo: Nicky Catley

By Sue Williams
May 23, 2025

When Vanessa Crump had a new five-bedroom house built, her neighbours couldn't believe their eyes.

"When I drove past on my way to work this morning, there was nothing there," one told her. "By the time I got home again, there was a complete house standing! What the ...?"

Crump, 76, sitting on her verandah, looking out over the dam in the middle of her acreage in Sydney's north west, laughs. "You know, I could hardly believe it myself," she confesses. "My son was the builder, and he explained it to me, but you don't really understand it until you see it with your own eyes."

Crump's new house is one of an increasing number of prefab and modular homes now being put up all over Australia, with components made in factories and either assembled or erected on site.



Vanessa Crump's prefab home in Cattai, NSW. Photo: Nicky Catley

They're being touted as the brave new way of hammering the housing crisis. This is because they're a much faster way of building homes – both houses and blocks of apartments – and with far fewer defects, since they're made under controlled conditions away from the vagaries of weather.

Her son, Nathan Crump, is a builder who's been using the patented precast concrete home building system REZICAST for seven years.

"When it's suitable, it's my preferred way of building now," says the principal of Crump Constructions. "Structurally, the way it's engineered and made, it's superior, and I know I won't have any warranty issues or have to repair anything later."

“While it ends up a similar cost to a conventional rendered brick veneer house, you can put up the panels and roof in one day so you don’t get delays with bad weather and then have everything finished in 10 to 14 weeks. It also has great thermal properties so you need less heating and cooling. I know Mum loves it!”



A REZICAST home in Carwoola. Photo: Lachlan Johnstone

Over 100 homes have been built using REZICAST in the past 10 years, with founder and managing director Mick Johnson saying the system, which sends engineering drawings to precaster plants anywhere in the country, offers tremendous promise for helping solve the housing shortage more quickly. The average price of a home is around \$400,000.

“It’s becoming more popular all the time,” he says. “I think it really is the way of the future. It’s also resistant to bushfires, termites and floods, is very strong, and you can’t pick the finished home as any different.”

NXT TEC is another prefab system that promises fast results, with components manufactured off-site and assembled on-site to get to lock-up in four days. Chair and managing director Natasha Di Ciano says, “It’s like pieces of a building that lock together like Lego.

“When you look at the housing crisis, this kind of technology is pretty exciting because it increases the speed of delivering high-quality, energy-efficient homes. With speed, too, comes affordability, as you can live in it, or rent it out, more quickly.”



A NXT TEC pre-fab home build going up in moments, not months. Photo: Supplied

Then there’s PT Blink, hailed as the “IKEA of construction”. It involves a post-tensioned steel structure manufactured off-site and transported as a flat pack. This means that an apartment building can be delivered in half the time of the traditional process and at a 5 to 10 per cent lower cost.

“It’s an innovative technology that co-ordinates the design, procurement and delivery for developers for mid to high-rise buildings, and de-risks projects,” says chief executive Wayne Larsen.

“We have 190 apartment projects that we’re working on in total, and around 170,000 apartments in the pipeline, worth about \$2 billion. The challenge is to persuade developers to change their methodology.”

Speaking of IKEA, SBS TV's Dateline program recently travelled to Sweden to investigate how the country is also bringing flatpack homes to the market. Producer Colin Cosier says they have the magical combination of a culture of efficiency, innovation – and terrible weather.

“We can learn so much from Sweden for the Australian market,” he says. “It’s incredible, and my feeling is that we’ll see a lot more of this here over the next 10 to 20 years.”

Building 4.0 CRC is an industry-led research initiative co-funded by the federal government. Its chief executive, Professor Mathew Aitchison, says modular (where a complete house is delivered) and prefab (where it’s assembled on-site) are good choices for different circumstances, as well as whether to use timber or concrete.

“In Sweden and Scandinavia, they will tolerate a lot more homogeneity than Australia would, but it’s often about marrying good design into a manufacturing system so you wouldn’t notice how similar the homes are,” he says. “And it depends on the location and climate, too.

“For instance, we have a lot of timber prefab on the east coast, while in WA it’s concrete prefab because of white ants. But to supercharge the prefab and modular industry, you need to pull together as much demand as you can to create a strong and consistent pipeline of projects.”