

Ship-shape home solution

These popular cargo carriers are making waves in modular housing circles, writes **Jennifer Veerhuis**

They may have originally been designed for life on the high seas but shipping containers are now experiencing a wave of new interest as a form of accommodation.

As Australians become more open to alternatives to traditional bricks and mortar, homes made from shipping containers have become a viable and in many cases quick way of creating new housing.

Next month a house made using 13 shipping containers will be installed on a site at Cronulla in Sydney's south, the culmination of an innovative architect-designed project using containers supplied by the Container Build Group.

Container Build Group CEO Jamie Van Tongeren says the project has generated a lot of interest in the industry.

"There's a lot of architects getting involved with more up-market homes (built using containers)," he says.

"The Cronulla house is right on the beach and it will be two storey, with underfloor heating, timber floors to the living spaces and fully tiled bathrooms."

Complete in 30 days

Container Build Group also make more modest shipping container homes for customers within Australia and overseas.

Jamie says the company has a variety of designs to choose from, with the Blue Tongue one of their most popular.

Built using two 40-foot containers (12m), the design includes two bedrooms, a bathroom, laundry, kitchen, two balconies and a veranda.

The company also builds granny flats, with the smallest option coming in a single 20-foot (6m) shipping container and the larger option in a 40-foot (12m) shipping container.

Jamie says the fact they can be built on site so quickly is attractive to buyers.

"Depending on when they order, we can usually build a house within 30 days and a granny flat in just five days," he says.

"Our homes come fully finished, with

walls, EPS panels or normal Gyprock, timber floors, vinyl floors and tiled bathrooms.

"All the insulation is on the inside and we also do buildings within the Blue Mountains which are fire rated with external cladding."

He says the container homes come fully plumbed and wired and finished inside, so that they just need the connection points on the outside to get the water and power in.

"If you don't want it to look like a container we can clad it in whatever you like."

Container Build Group fits out its shipping container homes at its base in Lismore in northern NSW, before sending them anywhere in Australia.

Once on site, the containers are lowered into place and local builders work on any finishing touches.

Passing the building code

While Container Build Group modifies its containers to make them more homelike, adding elements such as doors and windows, Jamie says this doesn't affect the structural integrity of steel shipping containers.

"They get reinforced — every time we make a cut the engineer specifies to reinforce them," Jamie says.

"They're fully engineered, otherwise they don't pass the building code."

Container Build Group also look after development applications through council, with Jamie saying approval times vary but most councils take just three weeks.

"We do all the council, engineering and soil tests," he says. "We get the approvals and we build it and then we install it."

"Really, it's just like a house but a lot stronger and quicker than a normal house."

Jamie says a two-bedroom container home built using two 40-foot (12m) containers costs from \$125,000 installed, subject to location, while the starting price for a studio-style granny flat in a 20-foot (6m) container with a kitchenette and a separate bathroom is \$25,000 for the unit.

More Container Build Group, containerbuildgroup.com.au



Containers are lowered to create a future home and (below) Container Build Group's Blue Tongue double width home.



Easy on the site

Royal Wolf also offers shipping containers.

Chief operating officer Neil Littlewood says there are many reasons why they are gaining popularity, including their cost, practicality, and sustainability.

Key advantages include portability and structural strength combined with the flexibility of either hiring or buying them.

"All units can be delivered to your site with the advantage of being able to be removed or repositioned if you relocate to another property," Neil says.

He says Royal Wolf's 20-foot containers are \$21,250, not including delivery. The 40-foot three-person containers are \$81,300, not including delivery.

More royalwolf.com.au



A 40-foot (12m) granny flat cabin by Container Build Group and (below) the interior of the Rural container home.

In a nutshell

- ✓ Have a home built in a matter of days.
- ✓ Opt for cladding in a different material to look less like a shipping container.
- ✓ The look of a regular home with doors, windows, timber floors and tiled bathrooms.



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