


# WHAT IS MODULAR ACCOMMODATION?

Dive into the world of modular accommodation – the game-changer for comfortable living! Explore benefits, history, and why the modular industry is the future of building. Click for insights!

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## So what is modular accommodation?

Well, you'd be justified in thinking that most people are already aware of the modular way of building, also known as relocatable, transportable, pre-built, pre-fabricated and manufactured. But the reality is that while most people have heard of or seen some form of modular building, very few fully understand the concept and how it really works.

As long as you're not a hermit, then you'll have noticed the headlines at times about a [housing shortage](#) in Australia. It's been grabbing the news for a few years now, but it's becoming more intense in recent times, and for good reason with various factors impacting it, including floods and the pressure on property values since COVID.

And along with this increased awareness as to the housing crisis, modular buildings are being [bandied around as a possible solution](#).

## Modular vs Housing Crisis

Fair enough. But hang on ... what's the link between modular and a housing shortage? So as part of our transparent approach, we wanted to write about it without any bias or specific industry viewpoint so you can gain a no-nonsense understanding.

## A bit of history for you firstly though ...

Story goes that thousands of years ago the Romans made sections of buildings in one place and took them elsewhere to assemble them! But what we'd consider the first form of modular was in the 1600's when someone from England wanted to get their existing home across to the new world of America, so they found a way to disassemble it into sections that were small enough to load onto a boat.

It was apparently successful, but it wasn't until the 1830's that someone did a similar thing for their son moving out to Australia. But this time it wasn't an existing home that was being moved, but sections put together to create a new home in the far away land, really the first known

precursor to today's industry as we know it.

Although this isn't meant to be a history lesson, it's good to understand that the concept has been around a long time.

## What are the basics?

Ok, so let's back up and talk about the fundamentals.

Here's a definition for you: Modular construction is a building process involving the off-site fabrication or manufacture of components in a controlled factory setting, using traditional materials, codes, and standards.

These modules are then transported to the construction site and assembled or re-assembled, and finished, resulting in a complete structure.

## But it might help to talk about what modular construction isn't.

It's not a [kit](#). A kit is where all the individual materials for a building are neatly stacked up and then shipped out to a site for someone else to assemble it all. From scratch. A kit has no off-site fabrication or manufacturing involved in a controlled factory setting – it's simply a pack of materials from a warehouse that are then constructed as per traditional building methods on site.

And modular construction isn't a way to cheat the building standards or construction code. There's a myth out there that if a home isn't built on site, then it can avoid having to comply or even skip the statutory approval processes.

## Some more myths.

It's a myth that may have had some truth to it 100 years ago when building in general was not regulated the way we know it today, and probably also because the early modular buildings were often very small and snuck under the radar more easily. No longer!

A modular building also isn't weaker or more likely to blow away (don't worry, we've heard these exact words used by people, but we know that isn't you). The reality is that modular is generally stronger to withstand any transport forces. And every foundation is fully engineered to stand up to the strongest winds for the location it's being placed at.

### Let's bring it all together.

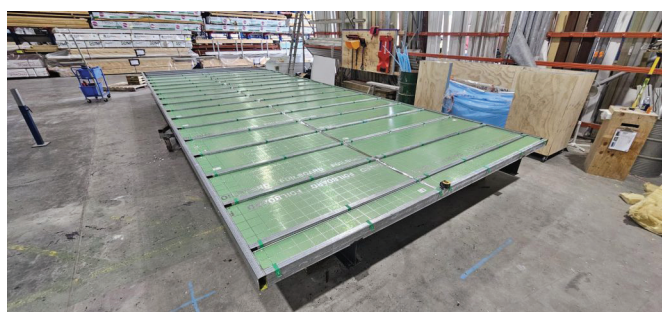
So you're probably starting to build a picture in your mind of what modular construction is. It's a process where raw materials are pulled together at a great big factory, and carpenters, electricians, plumbers and lots of other tradespeople build the building.

But ... and this is the key ... they build it in such a way that it can be pulled apart into modules (aka sections). So this means that the sub-floor, the wall frames, the roof structure, the cladding, even the electrical wiring is all carefully designed to be separated and then reconnected later.

### But the quality isn't compromised. Why would it be?

Quality in this application generally means that the product does the job its supposed to and for as long as it's supposed to. And by using the same raw materials as a building that's built on site uses, and using the same tradespeople, but building it out of the weather, in a controlled environment, hey presto, that's what you call quality!

We've seen many beautiful homes, classic homesteads, and impressive architectural buildings that are all modular. And they've met and exceeded the **building code**, signed off by the government, lived in and enjoyed by happy people for decade after decade after decade.



### But what about completion levels?

And another thing is the extent to which a building can be completed in the factory. Picture this ... cleaners coming into a factory to clean the finished building. Carpet is in, tiles are laid, grout installed, light globes screwed in – and even turned on and tested.

Of course, not every building takes it this far, it depends on several factors such as design, size, location, and the

scope of the contract between the manufacturer and the customer. Also consider the time advantage. If you have all materials stored in the one place, and all tradespeople come to the same factory, and there's repeatable processes, out of the weather, it's a no-brainer that time will be saved during construction, sometimes by months on a single project.

### So why aren't modular buildings used everywhere then?

Ah, good question, we're glad you asked.

Building on site will always have a place, and likely the biggest place by far. And there's good reason for this.

First up is the location. In the cities and suburbs, there are an abundance of both materials and labour close by many building sites, and duplicating the construction process by manufacturing a home in a factory and then moving it only a kilometre away is not always the most efficient.

So modular construction is often better suited to regional, rural and remote locations – areas where there's a lack of materials and labour.

### Design parameters matter.

The 2nd main reason why site building will still hold a place in the sun is due to design. Modular construction has come a long, long way since the 1800's, and there will continue to be advances in technology, but there are simply some styles or design demands that are either difficult or impossible to build in a modular way.

This is especially applicable to unique architectural styles with unusual shapes and extensive glass or other unique requirements. Some commercial buildings also have specific size and span requirements that are beyond the scope of modular.

And that's OK.

Because modular is not about being all things to all people. It's not a one size fits all, it's about providing a solution to a specific situation.

### And now we're back to the housing crisis.

So if a modular home isn't some cheap and nasty boring box that skirts around the Australian Standards, then what a brilliant answer to part of the solution to the housing shortage in Australia!

We say 'part of' the solution because we believe there aren't enough factories in Australia nor enough 'modular' expertise to meet the shortage by modular construction alone.

## Who are we to talk?


We know – we've been manufacturing modular buildings for **over 31 years**, and we've seen and understood the industry in detail, and how the government does and doesn't understand it.

And we've seen time and time again how modular hits the spot when superior quality and good design is demanded even though the distances are great, and resources are scarce. In other words, just like the current situation in Australia.

So as you're contemplating your next building project, consider the possibility of modular accommodation. Give it its due respect – it has a remarkable potential that only a small percentage of the population realise.

As they say, the journey begins with understanding. And you now understand the truth about modular construction, well done!



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