



Driftwood will have designs from various architects at Dicky Beach, *above*; Malcolm Middleton-designed house at Seaspray, *inset below*



Botanic, on Brisbane's northside, *impression above*, will have a variety of residences to choose from



Twin Waters Coastal Community, *illustrated above*, allows buyers to choose between existing architect-designed houses

Design label

Developers draw on architects' skills, writes Tonya Box

RESIDENTIAL developers are using some of the state's most acclaimed architects to design contemporary homes for new estates.

Buyers are more aware of what constitutes good housing design these days and are less accepting of the cookie-cutter approach to estates where every house looks alike.

Although less than 5 per cent of all homes in Australia are architect-designed, this figure looks set to rise.

"Size is no longer the feature in a good home," says James O'Hagan, project marketing manager of PRDnationwide.

"Clever and interesting design is now the ultimate showpiece for housing desirability."

Attributing the surge in home renovation shows and design publications to an increased awareness in housing design, developers in southeast Queensland are taking housing estates to the next stage of their evolution.

Buyers can choose between houses that incorporate the basic principles of good design, including climate consideration, house orientation and aesthetic appeal, without having to go through the process of hiring an architect.

In 2000, Consolidated Properties released the first estate of this kind.

Casuarina Beach, on the Tweed Coast between Kingscliff and Cabarita is a 3.5km oceanfront township stretching over 168 hectares. Fourteen leading architects were asked to design a contemporary Australian beach house for the development.

Buyers were able to build their own homes on the site in accordance with a

building covenant aimed at keeping design high on the agenda.

Since then, several developers have employed multiple architects to design dwellings for their estates.

While most appear on the coastline, two have made their way into inner city Brisbane. Botanic, by developers Ariadne and Watpac, at Mitchelton on Brisbane's northside, and Windermere, by

Baldwin Riverlands, at

Jindalee on Brisbane's west, recognise the value in using more than one architect to design their houses.

"When there's a variety of residences to choose from, that can stop buyers going elsewhere," Peter Davies of Ariadne says.

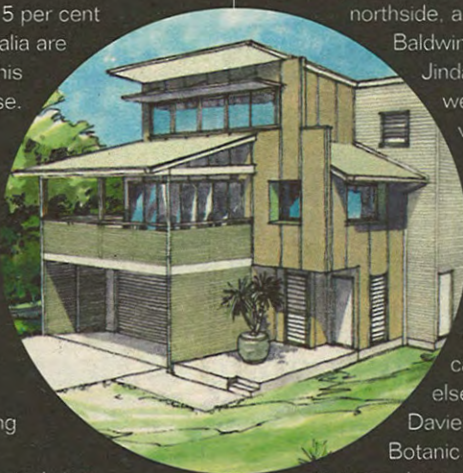
Botanic features villas and terraces designed by Cox Rayner and m3architecture.

Paula Whitman, senior lecturer at the School of Design at QUT and Queensland president of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects says it is good that people have higher expectations but she believes there is a potential dark side to architectural estates.

"Traditionally, architects are employed to fully understand the needs of the client and customise the house specifically for their needs. This is a step away from that. In a sense you're losing that tailor-made tradition," Paula says.

"On the upside, people who might have thought they couldn't afford an architect-designed house may now be able to."

Paula says it is important these estates don't become a stylistic competition between architects trying to out-manoeuvre one another. "You want the thread to be a response to good design





Elysium Noosa's first stage will have 40 houses designed by 12 architects including Elizabeth Watson-Brown, *artist's illustration above left*, Bark Design, *above right*, and Richard Kirk Architects, *below*

rather than a stylistic relationship between the houses," she says.

Elysium Noosa by developer Pearson Property Group is the latest estate to release architect-designed houses to the public. It differs to other estates in that the first stage will see 40 different houses designed by 12 architects built and, ideally, sold off the plan.

Managing director David Pearson says the company is not leaving good design to chance.

"If you just sell land and let everyone build their own houses, no one has full control over their lot. Elysium provides protection of value," he says.

Other developments that have employed the services of various architects include Driftwood at Dicky Beach, also by Pearson Property Group, Seaspray by Seaspray Project Management on the Capricorn Coast, The Boardwalk at Coolum by Stockland, Twin Waters Coastal Community by Lend Lease and Visage at Hyatt Coolum, also by Lend Lease.

Some of these estates also

allow buyers to build their own house in accordance with a building covenant.

Architect Shane Thompson from Bligh Voller Nield says there is a healthy competition between architects when it comes to designing houses for a single estate. Bligh

Voller Nield has designed houses for the Elysium, Driftwood and Windermere developments – estates which Shane says give him confidence that what they are designing will be part of a better

and more innovative complex.

"You have to be more reticent and conservative in a more conventional suburban community," he says.

"People who are too different can be frowned upon by neighbours and so they take a more homogenous approach."

Mason Cowle from Planit Architects says he enjoyed working with Gold Coast architect Paul Uhlmann on the Lend Lease developments. "It's good seeing the other architect take the brief and translate it differently," Mason says.

There is more scope yet for residential housing developments. Paula says a larger scale of intervention by architects in urban planning and streetscape design would be welcome.



WANT MORE? Botanic, www.botanicliving.com.au ■ Elysium, www.elysiumnoosa.com.au ■ Driftwood, www.driftwooddickybeach.com.au ■ Windermere Jindalee, 3376 5966
The Boardwalk, www.theboardwalk.com.au ■ Twin Waters Coastal Community, 1800 688 530 ■ Visage Hyatt Coolum, 1800 619 639 ■ Seaspray, www.seasprayliving.com.au