

Cheap and cheerful finds its happy place

Michelle Singer

After waiting two years to receive development approval on his house in inner-city Brisbane, Trinity property group's Toby Lewis decided to speed up the process.

So he started a modular housing company to cut down on time and cost while producing a functional and aesthetic home.

Yesterday, on Stradbroke Island, he launched Happy Haus — the company's first concept home, which was shipped, constructed and landscaped in a week.

"We've had quite a bit of inquiry already, people want to know what this amazing house is that landed in one day; all the Straddie locals have taken to it," Mr Lewis said.

Designed by Queensland architecture firm Donovan Hill and built by contractors Hutchinson Builders, Happy Hauses are being produced

from a manufacturing plant in Yatala, outside Brisbane, that has the capacity to produce 50 homes a month.

Prices start at \$105,000 for one bedroom, with delivery and installation extra.

Homes can be produced in two to six weeks and "modules" can be added to a property as a family's needs change.

"There are so many people wanting and needing to build something that's not too hard or too expensive," Mr Lewis said.

"We are trying to create affordable, well-designed, well thought-out products that everyone can access — and access quickly."

Mr Lewis said they're not the cheapest prefab housing option in Australia and not "revolutionary" in their materials but the architectural appeal is being viewed favourably by first-home buyers and small



Oh, happy day . . . Happy Haus' Toby Lewis has spotted a niche in the market for affordable housing.

Photo: GLENN HUNT

investors looking for an affordable option for holiday homes.

"The greatest risk to building a home is approval times: it depends on what the land is and where it is. In some cases it can take six months

to two years to get approval; that's the biggest risk — people's time."

Plans for mining and indigenous community accommodation as well as schools and site offices are being considered, with inquiries coming

from Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Tasmania.

Mr Lewis said if demand continued, the plan in the next 12 to 24 months was to open a second manufacturing operation in Queensland.