

Your new home's on the back of a truck

Life is a lot simpler when houses are delivered direct to your block of land
writes **Richard Conrad**

ANYONE who has ever had a home built will know it's stressful, often takes longer than expected and can cost a lot more than planned.

Imagine, then, sitting back in a deckchair with a beer, watching as your new holiday home is plonked into place in big sections from the back of a truck.

Prefabricated homes have improved dramatically. Now it's possible to have a stylish home in a matter of weeks.

Modular housing company Happy Haus managing director Toby Lewis says prefab housing has struck a chord with homebuyers who need flexible and efficient housing options and "a quality, sophisticated home that won't break the bank".

Inquiries have come from bushfire victims seeking a "quick fix", and property owners on the Mornington Peninsula planning new holiday homes or extensions to existing holiday homes. Happy Haus is based in Queensland but transports its homes around the country. In

Victoria, prefabricated home builders include Kentucky Napier at Bayswater, RAL Homes at Ararat, EasySteel Homes at Bendigo and Glen Crest Homes of Narre Warren.

Lewis says Happy Haus uses architects to deliver "great thinking, style and brand leverage".

A typical popular design, the Dhan, consists of a base, expander and shed modules to provide anything from a \$50,000 one-bedroom extension to a \$210,000 fully fitted three-bedroom home.

Despite the obvious attraction of a ready-built home, potential buyers need to do their homework.

"Make sure you work out the whole price," an architect warns. "It should include transport, on-site works and council fees.

"Any structures that connect the prefab to the existing house, such as a covered walkway, should be included."

Fire-resistance rating and regulations are increasingly important, too.

The Dhan is one of 19 designs

included in a new Bushfire Homes Service list (visit www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au) of homes that comply with new Australian bushfire standards.

The Dhan offers a choice of five levels of fireproofing, depending on what level is required for a site.

Green credentials include plantation timbers, low carbon footprint, insulation, water-efficient plumbing fittings, best environmental practice in the factory and less impact on the environment during construction.

Lewis says prefabricated homes remove the pain, risk and wait out of building, but one factor beyond their control is planning approval.

"We can't influence the waiting period for council approval, but can cut the construction period significantly — down from the three to 12 months for a home to two to six weeks for off-site construction and less than a week for transport and installation," he says.

