

WATERSHED DESIGN

WHEN THE OLDEST BUILDING COMPANY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO BREAK WITH A CENTURY OF TRADITION, THEY DIDN'T DO IT BY HALVES.



This is the home that is literally stopping people in their tracks as they drive through Quindalup, in the Murray River region of Western Australia. “We always knew that this home was going to garner a lot of attention,” says Plunkett Homes managing director Tony Pritchard. “We built it next to the highway so that it would be highly visible. People are literally pulling off the road and coming in to see what we’ve done here.”

The home, named ‘The Watershed’, is totally unlike anything that Plunkett Homes have built before. For a start it breaks with their 100-year-old tradition of brick construction, using Linea® Weatherboard instead. The design itself breaks new ground too, with a frontage of 38m, (more than double that of your average house) it’s a home with huge presence.

“Murray River is one of the fastest growing areas in Australia,” says Tony. “It’s very much sought after by sea-changers. People are moving to this region because they want to be on the coast with access to views, more space and the chance to reinvent the way they live. They’ve worked hard, saved their money and made some big changes. Now they’re looking for a home that reflects that.”

The Watershed has been specifically designed for larger rural and coastal properties. Its massive glass frontage is designed to maximise views and passive solar heating in the winter. ▷



“ The thinking behind this home was to create something that really broke out of the box. ”



The dramatic sense of space is highlighted by the minimalist design principles used.



"It's all about orientation to the sun," says Tony. "The house is only 9m at its widest point, so it's essentially a long thin rectangle, which maximises light and solar heating. It can be opened up on both sides to create a natural breezeway through the huge pavilion-like living space and an easy flow out into the outdoor living spaces.

"The thinking behind this home was to create something that really broke out of the box. That was partly the reason for using Linea Weatherboard. It's something totally different for Western Australia where there are so few weatherboard homes. The profile of the boards creates great shadow lines and gives the home real definition. Linea works really well in combination with the render panels and glass. Using these different materials breaks up the long frontage into defined sections and creates visual interest. The feedback from customers has been great. They see it as something very contemporary and stylish."

Inside, the home is equally stylish – with a dramatic sense of space and minimalist design sensibilities. This is partly due to the actual dimensions of the vast 14m x 6m open plan living, dining and kitchen area which has been emphasised with high vaulted ceilings and the light-coloured timber flooring.

In contrast to traditional interior design, which is all about filling or decorating space, minimalism is about taking away. Elements are reduced to the bare minimum, making us more aware of that space. By embracing the 'less is more' philosophy, this home focuses attention on the underlying shape and structure of the walls, floors and vaulted ceilings.

Colour has been used sparingly. For example, in the kitchen an aqua coloured bonded glass splashback provides a dramatic burst of colour in contrast with the neutral white and grey of the walls and granite benches.

In the master bedroom, that minimalist style continues, with recessed Japanese sliding doors into the master bedroom creating soft, muted light through the rice paper panels. In the ensuite bathroom, once again less proves to be more, with simple, clean uncluttered lines and surfaces allowing attention to focus on the elegant and sculptural shape of the free-standing bowl-shaped basin and the single tap.

"The people who are coming through the home appreciate the level of attention to detail and the thought that's gone into it," says Tony. "Many of the people who are moving into the Murray River area are at an age where they're ready for a big lifestyle shift. They're often empty nesters with a lot of living left to do – and they want to do it in a home that not only works functionally, but aesthetically too." ■

