

Disrupting expensive city housing with Big World Homes

By [Lindsay Samson](#)

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Housing prices in most of Australia's major cities have been consistently high for a number of years ensuring that, for many, the dream of home ownership will remain just that - a dream. A new venture called Big World Homes is bolstering a move toward more affordable housing, offering a solution for those struggling to enter the housing market with their small, flat-packed homes.

Australian architect Alex Symes describes the off-grid homes as “IKEA on steroids”. Measuring just 13.75 square metres and arriving on the back of a trailer, the homes are built with 39 flat-pack panels made from plywood, thermal insulation and lightweight cladding – materials that have as low of an environmental impact as possible. A drill, wrench, hammer and perhaps some online support are all that is needed for the homes successful construction.

Selling for between \$60K and \$80K in Australian dollars (\$45K to \$60K in USD), the concept of the home is entirely about reducing costs. Symes is aware that “the biggest cost in terms of construction is your land, and then all the labour and hardships that come on top of that.” Big World Homes hopes that, through partnerships with developers, councils, community groups and individual landowners, they can find spaces – from unused plots to backyards – where pop-up communities can be established.



Designed to be modular, owners can add more sections to the units to enlarge their space – meaning that the homes are able to grow in tandem with its occupants. Upon purchase, the units arrive equipped with everything needed to get it up and running, including the trailer upon which it sits.

“It has all its water tanks,” Symes told ABC News. “We have two potable water tanks, we’ve got one grey water tank, so all the waste water effectively comes to the grey water tank, you add an additive to it and then effectively that’s safe to go on your garden. We’ve got the gas cylinders for cooking and also for hot water heating, [and] we’ve got batteries at the back – they’re linked to the solar PV and that’s effectively what runs all your lights.”



This past September, in Waterloo, Australia, a group of unskilled volunteers came together to build one of the flat-packed units for its public debut at the Sydney Architecture Festival. Big World Homes is also currently running a crowd sourcing venture via Chuffed to begin construction of the first homes and to develop a pioneer community of them.

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