

# APARTMENT house

BLURRING THE LINES BETWEEN HOUSE AND APARTMENT, ARCHITECT DAVID WEIR DESIGNED A HOME THAT BLENDS THE BEST OF BOTH.

Small is the new big in residential design. Or rather, that's how it should be, says Perth-based architect David Weir, who believes we should be looking to build homes that are sustainable, affordable and not too big for our needs.

Weir designed and recently moved into the 'Apartment House' in North Perth, an inner-city suburb of Western Australia. Set on a tiny 200 square metre plot, the Apartment House is a smart solution for limited land and a whole lot of vision.

The concept arose from wanting to live in a space that wasn't too big for his needs and simultaneously being underwhelmed by the "white-box apartment block offerings" available in his home town.

The home is just 93 square metres, with some 200 square metres of outdoor space cleverly created by the construction of an entire roof deck. Within those 93 square metres are dozens of clever design and storage solutions that make the home energy efficient and completely workable.

"I think it's the kind of place that we should be living in now and in the future," says Weir. "It's got a lovely privacy about it, but also a shared-space feeling."

The house is also an anomaly in Perth, a place famed for its predilection for bigger-is-better, McMansion dwellings.

In the face of rising land and energy costs, burgeoning urban sprawl and environmental

concerns, Weir is part of a movement aiming to create an exciting and vibrant urban community in the world's most isolated capital city.

On his desk sits a copy of renowned landscape architect and academic Richard Weller's book *Boomtown 2050* – a tome to how Perth might grow and look as its population is set to more than double in the next 40 years.

Weir ignored the pressure felt by many in the west coast's design and creative community to head east for work, instead choosing to make his mark at home. Weir acknowledges Weller's book was "a terrifying read" but that it also made him want to stay in WA and "effect change".

Whilst he takes on all types of design work, Weir is particularly attracted to working with artists and entrepreneurs aiming to create great spaces.

He's involved with the William Street Collective in inner city Northbridge where he designed the fit out for The Bird, a small live music venue created in a former optometrist's shop.

In planning the Apartment House, Weir and his partner took an audit of their previous home to consider what they actually used and needed.

"One bed, one bath, a jug of Pimms on the roof and a café down the road – everything anybody could need," is his catchphrase for the resulting Apartment House.



The home's north-facing wall is comprised of glass sliding doors, allowing for efficient heating and cooling and natural light to flow in. A laundry 'pod' cleverly separates the w/c from the shower in the single bathroom.

Access to the roof – inspired by gatherings of the young cast in *The Secret Life of Us* – is via an external, industrial staircase. Here sit a few old concrete pots in the style of the surrounding neighbourhood gardens and an area set aside for a soon-to-be fire pit.

A large blue Perspex bathroom skylight juts into the roof area.

"The light inside the bathroom is amazing and the presence of the box on the roof deck is just downright good fun," Weir blogged during its construction.

"Plus you can see it from the street, which is cool. I was somewhat worried that this house would come off as far too serious and wouldn't have enough joy in it, but the box puts that to bed," he muses.

Weir has designed the house as a prototype for the sort of efficient dwellings he'd like to design for people with similar living needs to himself, and first homeowners.

He laments the domination of homogenous project homes but adds that the cost of custom building can be very high.

Weir faced the usual frustrations caused by strict and unimaginative local government planning rules during the home's construction but is delighted to have managed his way through and see his concept and design come to fruition.

"It's a beautiful space. When you walk in, it makes you smile."

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