

## Tiny houses

It's easy to understand why we look for the largest, most prestigious properties we can afford – we are constantly urged to define our success by our possessions: bigger, better, newer, faster, shinier. A relatively recent counter-movement, however, urges lower impact, fewer goods and less consumption, and at its core nestles the tiny house.

With the price of property ownership creeping skyward across most parts of Australia and leaping into the stratosphere in others, a big home isn't always affordable to buy. Add the cost of energy and living, and big isn't always affordable to maintain, either.

With the boom of environmentally friendly housing and a return-to-basics design mentality, a trend for micro housing has cropped up, producing some positively diminutive living arrangements.

Whether it's a one-room cabin with a loft for a bed space, a Japanese tree house or a converted shipping container, the trend in minimalist shelter has well and truly skyrocketed.

Despite how innovative those ideas are, there is no denying that they aren't suited to everyone. What could apply broadly, however, are their lessons in downsizing. Not only can people save money, but they can save time and energy, too. It's a good idea to consider the following benefits of smaller housing before buying the biggest home you can afford.

- **Less expensive.** Small homes tend to have smaller price tags. This can be the difference between living comfortably while saving for your future or an investment property or worrying about what will happen if the market turns. Less debt also, generally, equals lower risk.
- **Energy efficient.** Having fewer rooms to heat and cool saves on energy costs and lowers your ecological footprint, too.
- **Less maintenance.** Big houses generally mean more maintenance. This applies to the week-to-week cleaning as well as the big responsibilities, such as clearing gutters, mending fences or painting walls, which can't be shirked if you intend to protect your investment.
- **More time.** All of the above leads to time saved for everything else. The more money and maintenance required for the upkeep of a home, the less time you have. For many, this is a lifestyle choice, but an important one nonetheless.
- **Easier to sell.** Smaller, more affordable homes are less likely to end up stranded in the property market. The more people who can afford to buy your home, the easier it will be to sell in future.