

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## **“Flat pack” homes the way of the future**

The University of Tasmania’s Centre for Sustainable Architecture with Wood (CSAW) has partnered with industry to produce what may be the "flat pack" timber home of the future.

CSAW Director, Associate Professor Gregory Nolan, said a research partnership with Australian softwood producer Carter Holt Harvey had resulted in the development of a panellised construction system that allows homes to be prefabricated and erected in as little as three days, without the use of any heavy machinery.

Prof. Nolan compared the prefab homes to "Ikea-style flat pack furniture" and said they were ideal for isolated parts of the world or locations where skilled labour was in short supply.

"Over the past two years we have been doing work with indigenous and remote area communities in the Northern Territory to look at ways in which they can use wood to solve housing issues," Prof. Nolan said.

"At the same time we have been working with industry colleagues, in this case Carter Holt Harvey, to develop a panel system that can be manufactured in a central location -- whether that be Canberra or Darwin -- and then deployed to more remote areas."

The prefab homes were engineered to withstand tropical cyclones and other extreme weather conditions common to the Northern Territory. They also have a guaranteed resistance to termite attack.

"Prefabricated timber provides a whole range of benefits that something like masonry does not," Prof. Nolan explained.

"These buildings can be prefabricated and put together to a range of designs in a very short space of time using only a very simple tool set."

A prototype of the prefab home was erected at Marrara Christian College in Darwin earlier this month, and Prof. Nolan said he believed similar prefabricated homes would become more common in Australia in the future.

"There is no reason why a lot of domestic construction in Australia can't move this way," he said.

"Internationally we see more and more of a trend towards panellisation and prefabrication.

"It is becoming more attractive to both major builders in suburban areas as well as remote areas.

"Moving things into a factory allows you to ensure quality as well as delivery without having to cope with site conditions."

The development of the prefabricated timber home follows a similar CSAW industry partnership last year to build homes for the Gumatj community in Arnhem Land.

Marrara Christian College business manager Richard Hart said the two-bedroom kit home would be used as a caretaker's cottage.

"However, the real benefit to us is the training opportunities it has offered our Year 11 and 12 students at our trade training centre in putting it together," Mr Hart said.

"So much good learning takes place during a project like this, and we are looking at doing a four-bedroom model next."

**For more information contact CSAW Associate Professor Gregory Nolan on (03) 6226 7282 or UTAS communications officer Luke Scott on (03) 6324 5019.**

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