Media Release

For immediate release  Wednesday, 16 April 2014

Do your homework before buying a kit home

Take a trip around Victoria and you will find that kit homes are commonplace in beachside and country towns. This is because buying and building a kit home can be an affordable and quick housing option with many pre-fabricated homes and a wide array of designs on the market.

Kit homes are generally purpose-built and can be supplied in a range of pre-built stages, from simple pre-cut materials ready to build, to fully assembled homes ready to place on-site.

More and more people in regional Victoria find kit homes an attractive option where building can involve long lead times due to distance.

However, just like any form of building, Victorians wanting to construct a kit home should do their homework to ensure it is built to code.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Building Authority, Prue Digby, said that some people are unsure about whether the supplier of kit homes or the homeowner overseeing the project is the builder.

“The VBA recently prosecuted a kit home supplier who claimed the homeowner was the builder for the project. The company and its director were charged with doing work without being a registered builder, as well as other related charges, and found guilty by the Magistrates Court. The total fine was in excess of $22,000,” she said.

“Anyone interested in purchasing a kit home should ensure they use a reputable supplier, and research the building and planning requirements for the particular region before getting started.”

Contacting your local council building surveyor should be the first step in purchasing any kit home. They will advise on whether the home is likely to be subject to flood, bushfire or even termite-prone.

Things to consider when building a kit home

Permits and paperwork

- In some cases a kit home will require a planning permit from your local council prior to a building permit being issued.
- A building permit is necessary to build any kit home. If a building permit is not obtained prior to installing a kit home, the owner is considered to be undertaking illegal building work and may be subject to hefty fines.
- You can check if the supplier will obtain the necessary planning and/or building permit approvals on your behalf.
- You should also check with your local council, or building surveyor, about any necessary soil testing, foundation engineering or protection of adjoining property that may be required prior to building.
- If you are in a remote regional area not serviced by reticulated sewerage and water systems, you should investigate any requirements for septic tanks, rainwater tanks and electricity connection.
Purchasing a kit home

- When looking for a kit home make sure you know about any geographic hazards that require particular building materials to be used in your region, such as fire safety, termite management, snow loads or flooding.
- Ensure you buy your kit home from a reputable business. Ask other people who have purchased them.
- Ask to see an energy rating for your kit home, to ensure it meets the 6 Star Standard (this is also a requirement to obtain a building permit).
- Make sure you are clear on what is and isn’t included in the price of your kit home.

Getting your kit home installed

- Kit homes can be installed in two ways: by carrying out the building work yourself as an owner-builder or by using a registered builder (either through the supplier or you can appoint your own).
- It is illegal for an unregistered builder to install your kit home if the installation costs more than $5000. If your supplier offers an installation service, make sure they are a registered builder. Using an unregistered builder means your home is not covered by domestic building insurance and if things go wrong you may have limited legal recourse.
- You will also need to use licensed tradespeople, such as plumbers and electricians, to complete the installation.

For more information visit www.vba.vic.gov.au

ENDS

Media enquiries
Senior Communications Advisor – Larissa Bell – 03 9618 9330 - larissa.bell@vba.vic.gov.au
Communications Manager – Kate Volard – 0418 271 988 (after hours)