

PROPERTY

24 Awards won between 2004 and 2014 by Humphrey Homes

Timber in style for luxury homes

Dan Wilkie

dan.wilkie@businessnews.com.au

@dwilkie34

ONE of Perth's most exclusive home builders says double-brick construction is no longer in vogue at the top end of the market, with clients becoming increasingly willing to explore alternative building techniques such as timber framing and cladding to achieve a specific look for their home.

Humphrey Homes has been operating for the past 16 years at the top end of the market, building between three and seven homes per year, mostly in leafy western suburbs locations.

Director Dean Humphrey, who recently put the finishing touches on a plantation-style house in Cottesloe, said many clients had come to the builder with a specific look in mind, one they had seen in the eastern states or overseas.

Those specific looks, as Humphrey Homes' clients have discovered, do not always entail building a house using double-brick construction, the method of choice in Perth.

"We're one of the only cities in the world that does everything in double brick," Mr Humphrey said.

"But it's finally changing, and it's very much changing in the luxury space.

"Because of things like Pinterest, Facebook, Google, all those sorts of things, people are searching for new things.

"They won't know how it's done or exactly what the building products are, but they'll show us photos and we'll evolve it for them."

Mr Humphrey, a carpenter by trade, said Humphrey Homes specialised in timber-framed construction, which has been long viewed as the poor cousin to double brick in Western Australia.

But he said timber-framed builds provided several advantages over brick construction.

"The eastern states, New Zealand, America and most of Europe is all timber-framed, that's just how they do it," Mr Humphrey said.

"One of the benefits is there are no wet trades, like brickies or plasterers, and they are expensive, time consuming and messy.

"The one main trade is carpenters, so that makes it a bit faster, it's a bit more cost effective and you can get the look you want.

"Timber is sustainable, it's easier to work with, and thermally we



RIGHT AT HOME: Dean Humphrey at a Cottesloe home, which has become a demonstration of the builder's capabilities. Photo: Attila Csaszar

can get just as good results as with double brick.

"There's not a lot of downside, unless you have it in your head that you don't like it."

The bespoke builder also has an in-house architectural practice, which Mr Humphrey said enabled the company to provide cost certainty and almost unlimited

design flexibility to clients seeking to build multi-million dollar homes.

"If we weren't designing, we wouldn't be as interested in new techniques," he said.

"I like to travel at least once a year overseas and go to places where they do things differently, talk to people and find out how

they do things, then bring that back and present it to our clients.

"It's all about the process.

"Every time we do a home, even though I think we're good at it now, we get better.

"We find something we can do better and that's one of our mission statements – continual improvement."