

## MASTER BUILDERS

**ROMINA DE SANTIS**, technical adviser at Master Builders WA, answers your questions about home building



## THE QUESTION

*What are the minimum requirements for security for a new home? My builder is providing a standard lock on the front doors and the built-in locks for glass sliding doors and windows. I thought at least a deadlock would be required as a minimum for security and personal safety.*

## THE ANSWER

Safety and security are not governed in building standards for the doors and of homes.

This is a personal choice, and outside the scope of the Building Code of Australia and building regulations.

I agree security is critical to reduce crime, feel safe in your home and lower insurance premiums, as your security arrangements are one of the first things they ask you about when assessing your premiums.

Some think front walls and gates are a first defence for good home security; however, security has to be balanced with surveillance.

You need your home to be visible and have an open aspect to deter potential burglars from entering and then not being disturbed.

When reviewing the security for your home, you should look at the main points of entry, storage of valuables, escaping your home in an emergency and how you use your home.

A few questions to ask of your home or design:

1. Are there security screens on the windows and doors?
2. Can all doors be opened with the same key? This can be handy, but keys should always be counted and accounted for.
3. Double-sided locking handles are recommended for patio and sliding doors.
4. What quality are the window locks?
5. Do you have a secure bolt system on your internal manhole/s?

When you move into your home, here are a few

tips to keep your home and family safe:

- If you have cash or valuables in your home you should install a safe.
- Keep an inventory of your valuables/possessions (it is a good idea to photograph all your insurable items). If your home is broken into, you can prove to the insurance company what you once owned and provide the police with an accurate record of your stolen items.
- Do you have a security alarm system? If so, it is a good idea to have it monitored.
- Security/movement lights are recommended for security and safe movement around the perimeter of your home.
- Keep your keys/car keys in a safe place. Don't keep them on a key hanger near your door.
- Window treatments are essential part of security.
- Criminals often do their reconnaissance at night, when your lights are on and the curtains are open.

On the other hand, leaving outdoor lights on gives you a clear sight of your outside perimeter, thus deterring a criminal with intention to enter.

There are a number of Master Builder members who provide security services on our website. Check our 'find a member' directory for further advice.

**For more information about building, visit the Master Builders A-Z Building Information Directory at [www.mbawa.com](http://www.mbawa.com). If you have any questions about home building or purchase issues, email [romina@mbawa.com](mailto:romina@mbawa.com)**

# MICRO LOT HOUSES OFFER POTENTIAL

*The building of micro lot houses won't suit everyone, but they will provide increased diversity and affordability to our existing housing market. Master Builders director Michael McLean reports.*

**T**HE WA Planning Commission has released a draft position statement for housing on lots of land less than 100sqm.

This initiative has come in response to growing interest and demand for more medium-density housing lots, and follows similar developments in the eastern states involving both new (greenfield) and existing (infill) residential areas.

The motivation for building on such small lots is to improve housing affordability, create dwelling diversity and to facilitate downsizing or right-sizing opportunities.

Development on lots less than 100sqm needs to be integrated with the streetscape and surrounding infrastructure in order to receive planning approval.

A list of criteria has been proposed for lots less than 100sqm in development zones which have approved structure plans in place or special council approval prior to the development occurring.

Following a tender process, Now Living, in partnership with the Department of Communities, was awarded the contract to build 11 homes in a trial innovation development precinct, located within LWP's Ellenbrook estate.

Lots were to be green-titled with a minimum of 80sqm, and were positioned directly in the town centre, close to amenities and current and future public transport hubs.

Two of these homes have now been completed and I was fortunate enough to inspect them a few weeks ago.

The homes had a number of design challenges to overcome, such as

meeting outdoor living and balcony size requirements, minimum dimensions for room sizes as well as aligning courtyards and dealing with setback requirements.

Although I was originally sceptical about the practicalities and functionality of two-storey homes being built on such a small portion of land, I am now convinced this type of housing has a place in our increasingly diverse housing industry.

You have to visit these homes with under 100sqm of living space to appreciate their potential for the right occupant.

I believe innovative housing solutions, such as micro lots, are needed to stay ahead of Perth's changing market.

With changes in demographics as well as housing and lifestyle needs, alternative and affordable housing products are needed to facilitate this change.

These homes are designed as an affordable alternative to apartment-style living.

With a green title block and no strata fees/regulations, they offer a solution for those not wanting to live in high-rise buildings, but to have an easy, lock-up-and-leave property.

Targeted at first homebuyers, downsizers and investors, these compact new homes will suit those looking for a smaller home, without the additional maintenance that comes from owning a traditional block.

Whilst the cost of land remains high compared to the cost of building and people prefer to live close to public transport, shops and leisure centres, micro lots will offer an attractive alternative to a growing number of homebuyers.

