The Western Australian building industry has traditionally been dominated by double brick homes. Brick has been readily available as a building material largely because Perth has a large resource of clay. Also, most of Metropolitan Perth is on the Swan Coastal Plain, which has very well draining sandy soil that is well suited to a concrete slab foundation.

But this is starting to change. Architect Sid Thoo is seeing what he calls the “Grand Designs effect” where people watch the TV show and get inspired by different materials and alternative forms of construction that are available today. This is starting to motivate people to do something different from the standard brick and tile home.

An example of such a home is the Mirvac display home at the Osprey Waters Development. Nestled along the banks of the Pristine Peel Inlet near Mandurah, about one hour drive south of Perth, Osprey Waters offers idyllic estuary living. As Tim Noakes, the Osprey Waters Development Manager, explains that for their display home, Mirvac “really wanted something with a point of difference, that was sustainable and built with a diverse type of materials.”

Sid Thoo, the architect who designed the display home says, “One of the things I wanted to do with the Osprey Waters Development was to promote alternative forms of construction. I wanted to showcase something that was a
bit different, to set a new bar and encourage people to build new houses other than the standard brick and tile homes that you so typically see throughout Perth.”

The 2-story home was built out of a product known as structural insulated panels (SIP’s) and Weathertext environmentally friendly natural hardwood cladding products.

Gavin Wilson, Regional Sales Manager for Weathertext explains that, “the panels are made from recycled timber and do not contain any glues, formaldehyde or resins and are completely eco friendly.”

Michael Cicanese from Element Builders built the home in just 16 weeks, which is 3-4 times quicker than a traditional double brick home. Michael says that “ this was the first time that we had used Weathertext and we found it very easy to work with. Being timber, all the carpenters were very happy to use Weathertext as they could use their own tools and did not need any special cutting equipment.”

The speed of installing Weathertext also saved money, as scaffolding was taken down a lot quicker when compared to using traditional brick.

Tim Noakes says, “Weathertext fits within Mirvac’s sustainability goals. It’s a 100% natural product, better than zero carbon footprint and the tight
construction time frame is beneficial to our programme. Its got very low maintenance and the 25 year warranty is terrific.”

Nick Stokes from Subiaco Restorations supplied the Weathertex cladding and is really excited about the lightweight timber 2-story house display centre. “Everything about it is different – it is exciting times. I commend Mirvac for taking the opportunity to try and change the market place within the industry in WA” says Nick.

Given that Weathertex is manufactured in Newcastle, NSW, Subiaco Restorations make a special effort to maintain good stock levels in Perth to make sure the timelines of supply and demand are cut down.

The entire home is clad in Weathertex using a mix of ExteriorBoard Natural and Ecogroove 150 Smooth. Sid Thoo explains that part of the design brief for the building was to design something that had a beachside feel. “The Ecogroove/ExteriorBoard combination provided us with the perfect aesthetic to give us that very natural relaxed beach feel” says Sid.
Tim Noakes says that it has taken a long time for WA customer’s perceptions to change towards the lightweight options and away from the double brick but Mirvac are now seeing a slow move that way.

Sid Thoo agrees and explains that “people are realizing, slowly but surely, that slab on ground, cavity brick and roof tile is not necessarily the only way to build a good quality home. There are lots of other alternative products, such as Weathertex, that are out there that can provide you with a very stunning, beautiful environmentally friendly and sustainable home.”

“I am looking forward to seeing more changes in the way in which we build and the materials that we use in Western Australia” concludes Sid.