

FRASER COAST BUILDING STYLES

POSTWAR MODERN

Approximate years

1950s – Present

Descriptions

The postwar period was defined by rapid growth and suburban expansion. Standards of living rose dramatically, the population boomed and almost everyone owned a car. While the so-called Postwar or Conventional house spread rapidly in the suburbs, homeowners and architects also began to experiment with new approaches to building design. The designs were in part a reaction to the standard, Postwar (Conventional) house, or the ubiquitous Queenslander. But they also responded to new ideas about living spaces, including demand for more light and open-planned living. These changes were influenced by international developments in architecture, art and technology, especially the space race and the beginning of space exploration; inspiration analogous to the development of the first modern architecture in the Interwar period.

While architect-designed Postwar Modern houses pushed the boundaries of the style, it was the beach house that became the defining image of the Postwar Modern house in Queensland. People had more leisure time and longer holidays than in the pre-war period. Combined with car ownership, living and holidaying at coastal towns was easier than ever before. This in turn created demand for small, inexpensive, modern houses that reflected the relaxed and informal nature of the contemporary coastal lifestyle.

There are various features that define the early Postwar Modern house in Hervey Bay. The most prominent is the roof design. Roofs tended to be flat, skillion, butterfly or low-pitched gable. The shortage of brick caused by wartime austerity measures encouraged the use of fibro cement sheeting and chamferboard. Abstract, geometric patterns and features were common, such as angled posts and fins that resembled space craft. Paint colours tended to be bright and bold. Landscaping was simple almost to the point of non-existence. Fences were rare, reinforcing the fact that life was lived at the beach, not the yard. Carports began to be attached to the house, replacing the detached garage.

The Postwar Modern house evolved as the century wore on. It grew bigger as incomes rose and entertainment needs changed. Houses began to be built with brick veneer and tile roofs. Garages were increasingly attached to the house, first under highset houses and by the 1970s even in lowset houses. Gardens also began to change. Lawns remained, but prominent examples were more formally designed, incorporating curves to offset the geometric focus or informality of earlier styles. Gardens began to incorporate formal planting too; for example, conifers in the 1960s and native plants like Grevillia cultivars in the 1970s. Nonetheless, some of the key characteristics of the modern house, like roof design, glazing and open planned living persisted and remain popular today.

Elements

Flat, butterfly, skillion or low-pitch gable roof.

Extensive use of fibro cladding and chamferboard. Brick begins to appear more widely from the 1960s onward.

Relative lack of ornamental decoration.

Casement windows.

Bright colours for external and internal surfaces.

Car ports or garages underneath the house.

Angled posts, sometimes with fins.

Large areas of glazing in later examples.

Prominence of the lawn. Historically lack of vegetation. Fences low or non-existent. More formal landscaping from the 1960s onward.



