



There's something about people who participate in high risk sports that tells you anything they do outside their sport will benefit from their strong will and determination to continually challenge the norm. People who live on the edge in this way are sometimes referred to as Type T, and apparently they're not just adrenaline junkies, but quite often the inventors, explorers and ground-breakers of our world.

There's certainly no grass growing under Piet and Vickie Baxter's feet. They have hit the Cairns ground running with their innovative building company, Modern Rustic. There's no place for static in this building enterprise.

Vickie is a livewire, her infectious enthusiasm and passion tangible. The air around her quivers with unsated creativity, and I feel the energy of 100 unique, award winning homes bursting through the restrictions of gaining recognition that accompany the birth of any business.

A trained zoologist, Vickie pulled out all stops to gain a place in the male world of industrial abseilers, an elite group of tradespeople who hang off the sides of high buildings and ships carrying out all sorts of high rope access jobs. The aim was to make enough money to secure her own future, look after her parents in their dotage, and then return to working with animals.

Industrial abseiling took Vickie all over the world, scaling the sides of ships and tanks and so on, until a job in Perth saw her meet the man of her dreams, Cairns born builder, Piet, just over two years ago. Instant dynamism saw Vickie give up the career that was keeping them apart and the pair eventually set off for Cairns by road via the Top End, with a carful of belongings, a swag, a dog and a bucketful of ideas for a new and trendsetting building concept.

Modern Rustic was born.

"Piet's pretty well established as a builder in Cairns; he's been building here since he was old enough to wield a hammer.

"We don't want to be just one of many, stereotype, square, whiter than white, off the rack house builders.

"A home is a huge investment for the majority of people, the biggest purchase of your life. If I had a house built,

I would want to feel connected to the builder, even after completion. I'd want the attention, I'd want my builder to get to know me, become my friend and share my journey beyond the handing over of the keys. Piet feels the same, we both want that connectedness with our client, and neither of us want to build square boxes with no heart.

"A house can have a WOW factor, but no soul," says Vickie. "We're building with soul, and warmth and we're the whole package from design through to construction and handover."

We wandered over to meet Piet, working on the awe-inspiring spec home Modern Rustic is erecting adjacent to the Marina at Trinity Park. I can immediately see the dynamism and originality of thought they share that will undoubtedly win awards for Modern Rustic.

Even in its raw bones state, the house is an artwork, bearing testament to advanced creativity and foresight, with natural features that take it into another realm of home design.

In this case, spec is short for spectacular. A winning couple, with foresight and ingenuity, winning designs, and I foresee, winning awards in the very near future.

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