

2 St Crispins Avenue Port Douglas

Supplementary Architectural Statement

There is considerable debate about what constitutes “Tropical Style” in a modern context.

Port Douglas traditionally was recognised by its identifiable image as a more traditional North Queensland village.

Typified by high pitched roofs, verandahs and wide eaves protecting walls designed with openings to catch the breezes.

Over recent years there has been a proliferation of alternative interpretations of the Tropical Style. Some more successful than others.

St Crispin’s owners were keen to explore a modern interpretation of the quintessential tropical style.

Our view of that design approach is that a successful outcome must be tested against the liveability of the designed spaces in terms of the enjoyment of the residents and contribution to the community streetscape.

In essence, in our view, that can be resolved as follows:

- A blurring of internal and external spaces offering residents a graduation from being fully exposed to the outdoors grading through increasing levels of protection from sun, rain and wind to internal sanctuaries that can be modified through air-conditioning, heating or cross ventilation.
- Wide eaves to protect walls from heating up through direct sunlight and protecting openings from rain.
- Excellent cross ventilation
- Integration with landscaped tropical gardens
- Optimisation of views where possible
- Protection from visual and noise intrusion from the street
- Spacious outdoor recreation spaces
- Incorporation of traditional architectural elements, such as screens, louvres, shade devices etc.
- Incorporation of a mix of natural materials and high performance thermal building fabrics.

St Crispins exhibits all the qualities as noted above.

It is suggested that whilst the project does not utilise a high pitched roof, the chosen roof actually is very efficient in insulating the occupants from radiant heat from the sun and its' inherent simplicity of form sheds water effectively, does not require much maintenance and exhibits a fine line in elevation which in turn does not dominate the streetscape as would be the case if a high pitched roof was used. It is stylistically more akin to a garden pergola structure and form.

As can be seen from the floor plans, each unit opens out onto spacious outdoor decks at each level and at the rear the landscaped walkways are open to the outside of the building, obviating the usual stuffy corridors and lack of natural light.

This configuration also encourages great cross ventilation from every dwelling which is quite unusual in most apartment buildings with internal corridors.

As can be seen from the perspective rendering great care has been taken to ensure the building displays highly articulated facades with strong visual elements punctuated in the timber, stone, glass and decorative screens.

Interestingly the external blockwork has been clad with timber board or similar to get away from the usual painted, rendered blockwork.

Although somewhat more expensive, the end result is that there are no masonry elements evident on external walls.

The cladding imparts more of a feeling of a lightweight structure with the added benefit of enhancing the thermal performance of all internal spaces, longevity of finish and enhanced protection from the rain and sun.

The screens on the front boundary whilst having been fabricated out of aluminium for maintenance reasons are highly evocative of the timber lattice screens seen embedded in traditional FNQ architectural expressions and do the same job of providing a dappled shade effect on the building to cut down heat loads and at the same time impart a pattern of light and shade across the building facade behind.

Most importantly the owners have taken on board the more expensive option of placing the vehicles in the basement. The crucial major benefit is that the site is not dominated by driveways and garages. This has a huge impact on site planning by dramatically increasing the amount of the site available for tropical landscaping which in turns provides the residents with very spacious outdoor recreation areas. Equally importantly the generous setbacks are well in excess of Council's requirements which allows for deep and substantial planting along the side boundaries to very effectively screen neighbours from looking into this project. Such levels of privacy between neighbours is rare in medium density housing.

In conclusion, it can reasonably be argued that St Crispins is a highly successful re-interpretation of Tropical Style that totally recognises the underlying drivers of creating an outdoor lifestyle in an urban setting.

The building sits beautifully within the streetscape and the amenity for all occupants is exemplary.

