



Precast delivers luxury housing

Luxury and functionality have been delivered with the construction of three boutique apartments in the Melbourne beachside suburb of Elwood. The approach to construction was refreshingly different and has resulted in an award-winning development.

This project posed challenges from the start. It was an ambitious vision to build three townhouses on a relatively small parcel of land of just 316m². To achieve that goal, innovative design was required. Precast concrete was a major part of the design solution. National Precast member Hollow Core Concrete was contracted to design, supply and install walling, flooring planks and precast solid slabs.

The stunning exterior of the Elwood apartments balances polished concrete panels with a lightweight timber cladding. The result is a unique combination of textures and finishes. According to Hollow Core's Peter Dover the development was complex. "It was complicated to put together. It looks good from the outside, but was complicated from the inside".

One of those complications was the accessibility on such a small work site. Precast was ideal for this scenario. The 44 wall panels were manufactured off-site with

Precast manufacturer

Hollow Core Concrete

Builder

Gaia Constructions

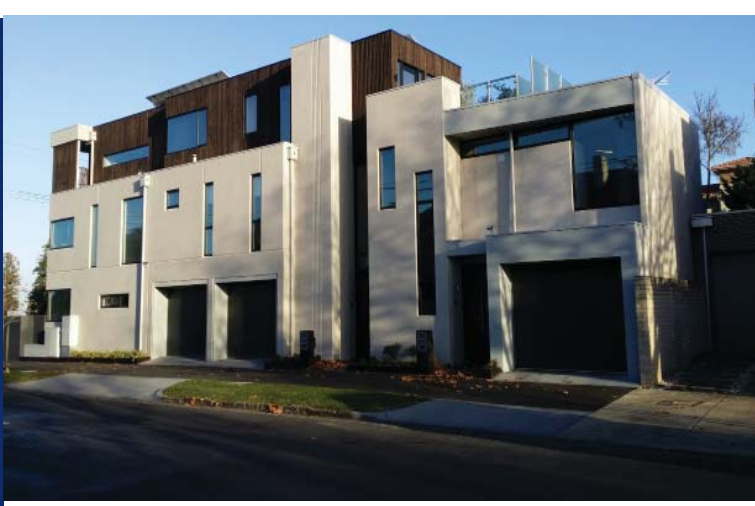
Architect

Millar Robertson
Architects

Engineer

Hollow Core Concrete

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attention to detail on the quality finishes. "This was a satisfying residential project to be part of. In the majority of projects we work on, the wall panels are covered or painted and in this case they were a feature of the design. They're wearing well and the house looks really good," said Mr Dover.

Wall panels were not the only precast concrete elements used on the project. 750m² of precast hollowcore flooring was also manufactured. 12 solid precast slabs were also supplied and installed for the balconies.

While the look and finish of the precast was important, speed of construction was critical. "It was all about the timing," said Mr Dover. "The builder wanted a fast and efficient construction and we delivered". The speed of construction was impressive and the project was completed in just 15 months. Traditional construction methods would have taken much longer.

The fast build and striking wall panels have resulted in much more than efficient construction and impressive aesthetics. The choice of precast concrete also ensures a low maintenance and durable finish. The precast is integral to the energy efficiency of the units, which have a high energy rating, maximising passive solar gains and insulation opportunities.

One of the unusual and particularly clever features of this development is the inclusion of two double car stackers. This provision of off-street parking is an innovative solution to the challenges of this small site. Precast concrete was ideal for this part of the build.

The client, Jeremy Gates from Gaia, is rapt with the finished construction. "Even the neighbours have commented on how great it looks and people driving by stop to say how good it is," said Mr Dover.

All the units were sold long before completion. As well, Gaia Construction took out the award for the "Best Multi Unit Development" at the Excellence in Housing Awards for this innovative project.

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