



# YARDS SHRINK AS CITY GROWS

**Aussie backyard thing of the past as planners turf out space for density**

**DEBRA BELA**  
REAL ESTATE REPORTER

IT WAS home to the Hills hoist, the cricket pitch, the ramshackle treehouse and the makeshift waterslide.

But is the humble Aussie backyard, the place where so many cricketers launched their careers, really dead?

With block sizes shrinking and new residential developments opting for central parks over traditional big backyards, some experts believe the patch of dirt where so many family memories were made could be a thing of the past.

Griffith University Cities Research Institute director Paul Burton said the Aussie backyard of the future had no room for nostalgia.

"Trying to maintain a backyard that is big enough to have a game of cricket, that's going to be increasingly difficult," he said. "But even if you have a 2m strip on two sides of the house and a bit at the front, could you use that more imaginatively and productively? Yes, but only if people are helped to think about that."

Brisbane's outer suburbs, once dominated by acreage, are

now home to some of the smallest house blocks in the city, with land sizes in one suburb dropping by 78 per cent in 10 years, from 1479sq m to 326sq m.

Across Brisbane, home sites have shrunk by about 200sq m in five years and are now at a median 607sq m.

Fig Tree Pocket in Brisbane's west is now home to the largest median house block size in the city at 1000sq m.

But not everyone thinks the humble backyard will go the same way as the dinosaurs.

"Absolutely not - I do feel it has become more difficult to obtain but people understand the importance of having a

back garden or a space for the family to get outside into," Foxtel's landscape designer Charlie Albone said.

Place Advisory and realestate.com.au have dug deep into the data to determine once and for all if the traditional backyard is dead and buried.

"There'll always be backyards but they're changing in terms of their size and in terms of how people use them," realestate.com.au chief economist

Nerida Conisbee said.

"They used to be grass with a few trees, now we know how popular swimming pools are and granny flats are being put in backyards, and there's a whole trend to see a backyard as an extension to a home, an outdoor room."

Mr Albone calls this the

personalisation of the backyard.

"People know what they like and don't like and want personal elements in the garden that makes their space unique," he said.

"It might be having a feature tile that may not be to everybody's taste but the client is the one that lives with it so they get the final say, a collection of garden gnomes or a bespoke piece of furniture."

Place Advisory director Lachlan Walker said that, while homeowners still valued outdoor spaces, the statistics indicated a changing demographic, where families had less time to maintain bigger backyards and were more accepting of smaller lots.

"People have busy lives and



don't miss the large backyard, they are happier with lower maintenance backyards, smaller pools, it's the house that makes the difference," he said.

Mr Walker said housing estates had a big focus on community living and initiatives such as Springfield's mega adventure playground, Orion, ensured residents had access to outdoor spaces.

"Families are happy to travel to locations for indoor and outdoor entertainment,"

he said. "And there is the rise of government spending money on skate parks and BMX tracks so kids can get out and ride their bikes in nice, safe locations."

In 10 years, homeowner Natalie Muir expects properties in the Greenslopes area, in Brisbane's inner-south, to get smaller as people sell off their backyards.

But with two young boys and a job in the city, she was determined to find a property

that had enough space for ball games in the backyard.

She found 18 Peach St, Greenslopes, on a 607sq m block in 2015 but a return to study has the family moving again and Simon Caulfield of Place Kangaroo Point has it listed for sale.

"I do see houses on smaller blocks now, and I can appreciate it because it's so close to the city, but it's still nice to have that big garden," he said.

"They can play cricket and the golden canes act as really good goalkeepers."

The Place Advisory data, which compared sales for the first six months of 2009 and 2019, shows Pallara in Brisbane's outer southern suburbs is now home to Brisbane's smallest median lot size of 326sq m, followed by Fitzgib-

bon in Brisbane's north where properties have shrunk by 42 per cent to 379sq m.

In the inner ring suburbs, Albion shrank by 32 per cent to join West End as the two smallest suburbs by backyard size, with median house blocks at 405sq m.

For homebuyers craving a larger backyard, Fairfield is the best option in the inner ring suburbs with a median land size of 618sq m.

The footy would find a home in the backyard of 9 Ashby St, Fairfield, where a four-bedroom house on a 607sq m is being sold complete with the Hills hoist by Geoff

Sellars of Ray White Annerley.

Fig Tree Pocket in Brisbane's west has the largest median block size of all middle ring suburbs at 1000sq m.

A five-bedroom retreat at 4 Sonanne Place, Fig Tree Pocket, is far from letting go of the backyard dream.

On the market through Alex Jordan of McGrath Paddington, the home has the lawns, water features and a pool all on 1000sq m.

And the best place for a backyard in the outer ring suburbs is Brookfield, in Brisbane's west, where land sizes are a median 936sq m.

Golf or tennis are the recreations of choice on the grounds of 17 Leatherwood Place, Brookfield, which is being brought to market by Adcock Prestige Brisbane.

The four-bedroom Georgian mansion features lovely lawns across a 6244sq m parcel including a private putting green and tennis court.

## BRISBANE WIDE

### ***Smallest median house blocks by suburb***

Pallara	Outer Ring Suburb	<b>326sq/m</b>
Fitzgibbon	Outer Ring Suburb	<b>379sq/m</b>
Albion	Inner Ring Suburb	<b>405sq/m</b>
West End	Inner Ring Suburb	<b>405sq/m</b>
Hemmant	Outer Ring Suburb	<b>405sq/m</b>

### ***Largest median house blocks by suburb***

Moggill	Outer Ring Suburb	<b>789sq/m</b>
Eatons Hill	Outer Ring Suburb	<b>790sq/m</b>
Kenmore Hills	Outer Ring Suburb	<b>912sq/m</b>
Brookfield	Outer Ring Suburb	<b>936sq/m</b>
Fig Tree Pocket	Middle Ring Suburb	<b>1000sq/m</b>



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**ROOM TO MOVE:** Natalie Muir with son Finn, 11, and Miles, 6, in the backyard of their Greenslopes home. Picture: Peter Wallis



## SIZE DOES MATTER

### INNER RING SUBURBS

#### *Smallest median house blocks by suburb*

Suburb	June 2009	June 2019	Change
Albion	595sq/m	405sq/m	▼ -32%
West End	448sq/m	405sq/m	▼ -10%
Greenslopes	655sq/m	412sq/m	▼ -37%
Woolloongabba	522sq/m	423sq/m	▼ -19%
Annerley	598sq/m	425sq/m	▼ -29%

#### *Largest median house blocks by suburb*

Hawthorne	561sq/m	600sq/m	▲ +7%
Kelvin Grove	601sq/m	607sq/m	▲ +1%
Newmarket	707sq/m	607sq/m	▼ -14%
Yeronga	771sq/m	607sq/m	▼ -21%
Fairfield	584sq/m	618sq/m	▲ +6%

### MIDDLE RING SUBURBS

#### *Smallest median house blocks by suburb*

Hendra	601sq/m	433sq/m	▼ -28%
Woolloowin	577sq/m	455sq/m	▼ -21%
Nundah	667sq/m	473sq/m	▼ -29%
Cannon Hill	601sq/m	529sq/m	▼ -12%
Murarie	646sq/m	533sq/m	▼ -18%

#### *Largest median house blocks by suburb*

The Gap	724sq/m	672sq/m	▼ -7%
Carindale	1523sq/m	674sq/m	▼ -56%
Chapel Hill	983sq/m	678sq/m	▼ -31%
Indooroopilly	872sq/m	690sq/m	▼ -21%
Fig Tree Pocket	1509sq/m	1000sq/m	▼ -34%

### OUTER RING SUBURBS

#### *Smallest median house blocks by suburb*

Pallara	1479sq/m	326sq/m	▼ -78%
Fitzgibbon	657sq/m	379sq/m	▼ -42%
Hemmant	624sq/m	405sq/m	▼ -35%
Virginia	672sq/m	405sq/m	▼ -40%
Shorncliffe	584sq/m	415sq/m	▼ -29%

#### *Largest median house blocks by suburb*

Ferny Grove	1543sq/m	780sq/m	▼ -49%
Moggill	1519sq/m	789sq/m	▼ -48%
Eatons Hill	1151sq/m	790sq/m	▼ -49%
Kenmore Hills	1175sq/m	912sq/m	▼ -22%
Brookfield	901sq/m	936sq/m	▲ +4%

(Source: Place Advisory comparison of land sales data from the first six months of 2009 and 2019)



SIZE DOES MATTER