



Huge potential with prosperous history

KEREN BELLOS

Just a dirt track from secret surf spots and surrounded by pristine native bushland, this is no ordinary property listing – and current owners Gary Bennett and David Paris are no ordinary vendors.

Carpenters, artists and co-founders of renowned fine furniture business JahRoc, the brothers-in-law bought the 14.5-hectare Margaret River property in 2007 to build the creative heart of their brand.

"I originally came down for the surf and was just going to build a holiday home," Mr Bennett said. "At the time, we were running JahRoc from the old flour mill in York, but when David and his wife Jo Paris – who is my sister – house-sat for my wife Lara Bennett and I in Margaret River, they fell in love with the coast too.

"That was when we started thinking about setting up a workshop down here.

"We wanted somewhere really beautiful to work and figured we could surf at lunch."

Together, Mr Bennett and Mr Paris built the 458sqm rammed limestone workshop, drawing on their love of making things.

The building – which includes an office, a kitchen and a dining area, a combined laundry and a bathroom, storerooms and a back room – was designed to be adaptable.

"Rather than build a tin shed, we wanted to create something special," Mr Bennett said. "It's a classic sawtooth building which catches the southern light, with lots of windows along the northern side making it passive solar, salvaged jarrah joinery and a strong well-insulated roof with solar panels.

"We built it in such a way that it could be lived in one day. It's a pretty substantial building, which could easily be repurposed."

Zoned residential with special use approvals, the block has an unusually large 8500sqm building envelope approved by the Shire of Augusta Margaret River for a home and five individual artisan studios – a layout originally inspired by the five creatively inclined children Mr Bennett and Mr Paris have between them.

"This whole region is full of artists and we imagined a little hub where they could all have an art studio space," Mr Bennett said. "The envelope is massive and pretty much unheard of these days.

"I used to camp out in the north-west corner with the kids – now, we've had barbecues and three weddings there.

"The bush is pristine, and if being part of the natural Australian environment floats your boat, I think you'd be hard-pressed to find something nicer than this property."

With Mr Paris planning to retire after 38 years

in the business and none of the next generation stepping into the business, the property – and potentially the brand – is now on the market.

"I'm not ready to retire and plan to keep working from home," Mr Bennett said. "We've built an incredible brand and it's been a great way to make a living.

"We have customers all over the world who love our designs.

"If the right person wanted to buy both the property and our brand, and needed a hand or advice, I'd be around.

"My dream would be to see someone build a beautiful home here, keep the workshop going and add a gallery – it's just so incredibly well set up for that."

Mark Hay Realty Group Principal Mark Hay said interest had already come from a range of buyers.

"We've had enquiries from people considering a statement home, a health retreat, a showroom, a retail space and even a school," he said. "The property offers rare seclusion just off one of Western Australia's most iconic tourist routes, with approvals already in place and huge potential if harnessed well."

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