

# In the news

Weekend West NEW HOMES

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On display: Sharon Bergamaschi, of Summit Homes Group at a display home.

Picture: Gerald Moscarda

## The worth of a woman in the housing industry

### GEMMA NISBET

When Sharon Bergamaschi got her start in residential building, women were not a particularly common sight in the industry.

But 13 years on, it's a completely different story.

"A shortage of skills in the industry means that the value of bringing women back into work once they've had children has been identified and male bosses are embracing that," Ms Bergamaschi said.

Having started out in the home building sector working in events management at the Housing Industry Association, Mrs Bergamaschi had four years off to have her two daughters before returning to work for a few different home builders.

She did everything from client liaison and pre-start consultancy to administration management.

She joined the Summit Homes Group almost a year ago as a display administration manager,

which involves getting new display homes off the ground for the Summit Homes and Lifestyle Homes brands.

This process begins by liaising with the land developer to purchase a block in a new estate, followed by design, with Mrs Bergamaschi passing on client feedback to the company's designers.

Interior design and shire approvals are next, followed the co-ordination of the finishes for the home, including colours, products and furniture.

It's this stage of the process that Ms Bergamaschi particularly enjoys.

"We get presented with new products when they're out — furniture and surfaces and so on — and I enjoy seeing that new stuff and how we can bring it to life in the displays," she said.

Her role then continues into the maintenance phase of a display's lifespan.

With a professional background in administration, Ms Bergamaschi said that the residential construction industry provided her with the opportunity to work her way up without tertiary qualifications.

"You can come in at the grassroots and get yourself into quite a highly paid and rewarding position without a tertiary degree," she said.

There were also good opportunities for working parents looking to strike a balance between their career and looking after children.

"A lot of the roles within the industry — for instance, scheduling, estimating and drafting — there's an ability to do those at home with a computer," she added.

Helping people to purchase the correct home for themselves was a reward in itself, she said, adding: "It's very addictive. I couldn't see myself working in another industry."

Perth Metro: 9333 0888  
South West: 9722 0300

