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RETIREMENT PROPERTY MARKET

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CONVEYANCER. AUSTRALIAN

*PITCH
PERFECT*

AIC NSW CEO
Jonathan Smithers

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Ready to listen, then act

Some handovers just feel right. This is one of them.

Jonathan Smithers took the reins at AIC NSW on August 17, and his résumé reads like three careers stacked on top of each other: 35 years as a UK-trained lawyer, Head of Property and Senior Partner at a Kent firm, President of the Law Society of England and Wales, CEO of the Law Council of Australia, CEO of Arthritis Australia.

Somewhere in there he also found time to sing bass with the Sydney Symphony Chorus and in 40 British cathedrals. Regulators, boards, black-tie dinners, music compositions – he's done the lot.

That mix matters.

Conveyancing roots, national advocacy muscle and a decade in the not-for-profit space is precisely the combination AIC NSW needs for what's coming: AML/CTF, regulation, education and qualifications, PEXA's grip on e-conveyancing, the cost of PI insurance, and the harder question of who joins this profession next.

Jonathan's opening move, though, isn't a policy blitz. It's listening. Members first, then the AIC Council, then everyone else. "I don't want to be running before I can walk," he told us. "I have to be conscious of bringing people with me on this journey." Listen, learn, then act – and when he acts, expect it to be bold.

Which brings me to Chris Tyler. Ten years as CEO, and he left us in August having handed over an Institute stronger, louder and better respected than he found it. He stayed on to help Jonathan settle in, because of course he did. Chris, thank you – from all of us.

A new voice takes up the tune. We think it'll be worth hearing.

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REINSW chief
executive
Tim McKibbin.

Spring sparks fresh hope for turnaround

By LEIGH REINHOLD

As the September selling season kicks off, REINSW chief executive Tim McKibbin is optimistic that both buyers and sellers will be drawn to the property market, though they'll need to set realistic expectations

The Real Estate Institute of NSW is hoping the start of the traditional September selling season will show signs of an industry recovery after a particularly brutal year for vendors, purchasers and agents.

"I can't remember a time when auction clearance rates were sitting this low," Tim McKibbin, chief executive of REINSW, said of the midwinter softening of clearance rates to between 41 to 48 per cent – half of the record clearance rate of 89 per cent set in 1997.

"The market has been very flat this year but I think we'll start to see some more activity now with the selling season kicking off.

"People need to come to grips with what the market is telling them because the expression that the market never lies is true.

"And what it's telling everyone is that the prices the market was achieving 12 to 18 months ago are not going to be achieved today."

McKibbin said the NSW property sector has been experiencing a "perfect storm" of unhelpful pressures, including rising interest rates, cost-of-living increases, labour costs, hiked prices for goods and freight – with rising fuel prices affected by the Middle East crisis, state government inaction and a fractured supply chain.

"There has been a lot of bad property news out there which all started with the interest rates going up," McKibbin said.



“From a vendor’s perspective, they’re going to have to start listening to the market and will have to painfully come to the realisation that they’re not going to get the price they think they will.”

– Tim McKibbin

“Prices are ultimately set by purchasers, not agents or vendors, as seen clearly at auctions.

“The cost of capital has risen so, from the purchaser’s perspective, they can’t service as much debt as they could six to 12 months ago. The amount of money they have in their pocket now at auction has decreased.

“From a vendor’s perspective, they’re going to have to start listening to the market and will have to painfully come to the realisation that they’re not going to get the price they think they will.”

Meanwhile, in other pressures on the industry, McKibbin estimates NSW is “hundreds of thousands” of homes short of the supply needed to meet demand for housing across the state, especially with 10,000-plus new immigrants arriving in the state each month.

“There’s a lot of people coming into NSW every month,” he said, “and the rhetorical question is, ‘Where are they all going to live?’”

McKibbin believes the government should have the “courage” to implement novel strategies to alleviate the housing situation.

“I would like the government to take the politics out of housing and to adopt

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some bravery and go in and do what is required, which is to build more homes," McKibbin said.

"Everybody says that the problem is supply. I think supply is the result of the problem and the real problem is political courage.

"The government just has to take a firm hand and say, 'We're going to build here'."

McKibbin said the Minns Labor government should be considering unconventional options in terms of development locations, including giving developers the public airspace above transport infrastructure.

"I believe we've got to be somewhat novel in our thinking," he explained. "So, if I was in government, I'd be saying to developers, 'How about we give you the airspace over railway stations?'"

"We'll gift it to you but, as part of that deal, you're to build properties that are capable of responding to the specific needs of people in the community."

McKibbin said building over the top of transport routes would provide many benefits for residents, including removing the need for car ownership and contributing to their overall health and wellbeing.

"If you build smartly, you can make an argument to people that they don't need a motor vehicle," he said.

"Each day they take the lift from their home to the train station, go to work, come home and there's a shopping centre on the ground floor where they can shop for dinner and there's all the other retail shops they may need.

"And on the first floor, they have all the other services, like doctors, dentists,

gymnasiums, childcare, all of that. And then, above that, they've got their accommodation, their home.

"I think that we need to build higher density quality homes in a high-rise environment."

McKibbin said the social and health impacts of long commutes, when people cannot live near where they work, are immense.



"Each day they take the lift from their home to the train station, go to work, come home and there's a shopping centre on the ground floor where they can shop for dinner and there's all the other retail shops they may need."

– Tim McKibbin

"More time spent travelling results in higher rates of conditions like diabetes due to less time spent exercising," he said, "while family relationships can be strained because people leave and return home in the dark.

"We need to be building where people work instead of them having to commute for hours every day."

While the "cool market" conditions prevail throughout NSW, McKibbin is loath to pinpoint any regions which may experience growth in the near future.

Although he said looking at the "micro effects" of a region – like knowing whether a new mine is opening or an abattoir is closing – can help predict whether an area will boom or bust.

To ensure growth and sustainability outside of the big cities, McKibbin said he would encourage developers to locate AI data centres in regional communities.

"We're talking about building these massive data centres now," he said.

"Would you build them in the middle of Sydney when the land costs you a gazillion dollars? Or would you take them out into a regional area somewhere?"

"If you go regional, you take the jobs with it and then you also get the ancillary jobs that come with having additional people in that area."

And while McKibbin's mantra is "listen to what the market is telling you", he said purchasers in this flat market shouldn't become too complacent.

"Obviously, if you're a purchaser you want to buy in a market where the prices are dropping," he added.

"But you've got to say to yourself, 'How far down is it going to go?'"

"The last time I looked at it, the median house price had dropped 0.9 per cent and I'm not saying it won't drop more than that. I think it's probably likely it will.

"But if people are sitting around saying, 'I'm going to wait until it comes off 30 per cent' or something like that, I think they'll miss the boat." **C.**



THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION

The Real Estate Institute of NSW is actively encouraging closer relationships between real estate agents and conveyancers by developing new tools aimed at "maximising cooperation" between the two professions.

REINSW CEO Tim McKibbin says his team has been working closely with the Australian Institute of Conveyancers (AIC) to develop its Vault platform, designed to cut through the compliance red tape of property transactions, as Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing (AML/CTF) legislation takes effect.

"We have the benefit of having Jennie Tonner [President of the AIC NSW]

on our board," McKibbin told AC. "As such, the REINSW – in conjunction with the AIC – has built an AML solution called Vault, a secure environment where transactions, movement of money and communications all take place inside Vault."

McKibbin said Vault integrates and streamlines the activities and workflows of conveyancers and real estate agents.

"They can go inside that secure world and the system will bounce through prescribed workflows, which the agent is prompted to select," he explained.

"So if it's a private treaty, they'll go

on that journey. If it is an auction, they'll go on another journey. From an AML point of view, they'll be prompted to do their risk ratings, that sort of thing.

"The system presents the questions. So the agent will then be able to answer the questions that are required of them and the system will respond to that.

"So we're looking at implementing as much automation as we can.

"And all of that is designed within a relationship with the AIC where we can work closer together, have visibility of each other's pain points, and be able to get the job done as fast as we can.

"It should be a relationship of maximising cooperation."

By RICHARD CUNNINGHAM

BLOCKS ON THE BOX: HOMES MADE FAMOUS BY TV SHOWS AND FILMS



The Kerrigan family fight to keep their home in the 1997 comedy *The Castle*.

From the Kerrigans to Kath and Kim, some of our favourite on-screen characters have helped transform modest properties into valuable cultural landmarks

Conveyancers must always be wary of funny business: the entertainment industry can be both a help and a hindrance when it comes to screen-famous real estate – particularly properties where the exterior alone has become well-known for appearing in a TV show or movie.

Take, for example, Sydney's 83 Moncur St, Woollahra, a freestanding block of units used in the 1970s primetime soapie *Number 96*.

In a show that shocked with sex scenes, nudity and gay characters, the four-storey eight-pack had a racy reputation. However, Woollahra is, in fact, a quiet, genteel and upmarket suburb.

Flats in Number 83 are tightly held. The last sale we can find is a two-bed with one bathroom and no parking that went for \$1,150,000 in 2019.

The Castle

If the 1970s are a little too distant, how about the beloved 1997 comedy *The Castle*? The hit film follows the Kerrigan family's battle against compulsory acquisition for a measly offer of \$70,000.

As patriarch Darryl Kerrigan would

say: "Tell 'em they're dreamin'!" Their house in fictional Coolaroo was actually at 3 Dagonet St, Strathmore, on the edge of Melbourne's Essendon Airport. The by-then dilapidated weatherboard house was sold in 2017 for \$40,000 – minus the block of land – and relocated to Beechworth where it's been restored as a family home. Townhouses now occupy the Strathmore site.

The Kerrigans also had a holiday shack at lakeside Bonnie Doon, which exists and can be rented on Airbnb. The house name, of course, is "Serenity".

Neighbours

Ramsay St, Erinsborough is the fictional Melbourne cul-de-sac where the characters from TV's *Neighbours* (1985-2025) lived. It's actually Pin Oak Court, Vermont South, about 20km east of the CBD.

With at least six homes featured, permissions could have been difficult, but all residents signed up and were paid for their trouble. They deserved to be: the location, once it became known, attracted busloads of fans.

Houses in Pin Oak Court are today valued at \$1.3 million to \$1.6 million.

Mother And Son

Another victim of progress was the *Mother And Son* house at 16 Rickard St, Rodd Point, in Sydney's inner west.

The 1984-94 ABC sitcom starring Ruth Cracknell and Garry McDonald featured the 1927 brick exterior and streetscape. The house sold in 2014 for \$1.95 million, replaced by a modern duplex. Relatively few bidders remembered the show: the appeal was the bayside location 9km from Sydney's CBD. Nearby houses now sell for up to \$5 million.

Kath & Kim

You'll be disappointed if you go looking for the original house from 2002 sitcom *Kath & Kim*. The "Fountain Lakes" house at 4 Lagoon Place in the Melbourne bayside suburb of Patterson Lakes sold for \$1.485 million in 2016. It was demolished in 2022. However, the owner first held a fan day to raise funds for a cancer charity, which was a "noice" gesture.

Packed To The Rafters

The three-bed *Packed To The Rafters* (2008-13) house at 8 Riverview St, Concord, in Sydney's inner west, sold last year for \$3,635,000. The marketing appears to have made no mention of its TV history but, smartly renovated in a prime location, it was hardly needed.

The Secret Life Of Us

Channel 10's *The Secret Life Of Us* (2001-05) revolved around young adults living in an apartment block in Melbourne's St Kilda. The exterior was 14A Acland Street, with rooftop scenes filmed a short distance away at 22A The Esplanade.

Described as a "brilliant" block of a dozen older-style flats, the Acland St units have been valued from \$500,000 to more than \$800,000.

The TV link may have faded but it's still a hip location. The median price for a St Kilda unit is about \$510,000. **C.**

READY TO LISTEN, THEN ACT

By RICHARD CUNNINGHAM

Photos ADAM TAYLOR

A highly accomplished lawyer and executive, the new CEO of AIC NSW Jonathan Smithers is also a talented singer. As such, he understands the importance of listening

The new CEO of the Australian Institute of Conveyancers NSW Jonathan Smithers has a very impressive résumé.

A UK-trained lawyer with more than 35 years' experience, he's been CEO of the Law Council of Australia, President of the Law Society of England and Wales, and CEO of Arthritis Australia.

However, one thing his CV doesn't mention is that he's a singer of considerable ability and some renown.

A bass voice, Jonathan performs with the Symphony Chorus, a group of about 120 highly skilled singers who regularly partner the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Compositions such as Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, Handel's *Messiah* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* are his passion.

"It's an incredible privilege to sing at the Sydney Opera House... packed out night after night," he told *AC*.

It's not just Sydney, however. In earlier years, Jonathan performed at 40 UK cathedrals, including Canterbury; and at Westminster Abbey.

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AIC NSW CEO
Jonathan
Smithers.



Jonathan Smithers has taken over as AIC NSW CEO.

Council of Australia,” Jonathan said.

“I’d been at the same place for a long time. I thought it a fantastic opportunity, I applied, and they appointed me.”

He arrived in Canberra with two suitcases in September 2016, beginning 10 years of executive leadership, advocacy and government relations in several not-for-profit organisations.

Fast forward to his new appointment to the AIC NSW. “Chris and the team have done a brilliant job over many years; I hope to build on that,” he said.

“When I looked at the operation there were things I’m familiar with... going back to my roots in conveyancing... but marrying that with the skills I’d acquired in the not-for-profit organisation world.”

He intends to spend his first weeks listening to members, the AIC Council and other stakeholders. Chris Tyler was sticking around to help him settle in.

“There are very pressing issues: AML/CTF, regulation, education and qualifications,” Jonathan said. “And in the longer term, how new people will be attracted to the profession.”

Pricing

He knows about price-cutting, and the risk it poses to business survival.

“From my own experience as a practitioner, if you compete on quality, you’ll have a sustainable business,” he said.

“If you compete on price, you may have a good business

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Now (if we may be excused one pun) Jonathan is singing from a different hymn sheet.

On August 17, he took over from AIC NSW CEO Chris Tyler, who is retiring after 10 years in the job.

Born in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, Jonathan gained a law degree at Nottingham Trent University, became an articled clerk with CooperBurnett Solicitors and eventually the firm’s Head of Property and Senior Partner.

As noted, he led the Law Society of England and Wales, chaired its Conveyancing and Land Law Committee, and was

a member of Her Majesty’s Land Registry Rules Committee.

“I was on lots of boards and committees, dealing with regulators, which I thoroughly enjoyed,” he said. “It was very professionally fulfilling to do those things.”

And potentially exhausting. One stint saw him make four or five overseas trips a year, attend 200 black-tie dinners and be a guest speaker at 50 events.

What brought him to Australia was a chance meeting with the then Law Society of NSW CEO Michael Tidball.

“Michael suggested I apply for the job of CEO of the Law



“The AIC has a role in educating the public that conveyancers are not just administering a system but exercising professional judgment.”

– Jonathan Smithers

in the short term, but not in the long term.

“Because you want clients to come to you as a trusted adviser, not because you’re opportunist.

“That’s an easy thing to say, it’s a hard thing to do. But if you take AML/CTF, for example, if the extra work is \$100 or \$200 a transaction you should be charging for it. And be proud of it.”

Jonathan hopes the AIC can not only win the confidence of conveyancers but also engage and inform the wider public.

“If you go to a doctor, a GP, that’s fine,” he said. “A specialist, a consultant will cost more. So, the AIC has a role in educating the public that conveyancers are not just administering a system but exercising professional judgment.

“They are their trusted advisers... not just someone who is putting a bit of information into a PC.”

He agrees with a point made previously in these pages: real estate agents, the government, brokers, even a property stylist makes more from a transaction than conveyancers... and they deserve better.

Media

Communication will be key. Expect more social media, an upgraded website, public speaking, podcast and TV appearances.

Jonathan wants AIC to be the trusted voice of the profession. “That’s something that has to be replenished all the time, to build on... and I think that can be achieved,” he said.

PEXA

He’s well aware of PEXA’s stranglehold on the \$300 million e-conveyancing market.

“If you’ve got an effective monopoly, then that’s a matter for government regulation and oversight,” he said.

He’ll be seeking examples of what’s perceived to be wrong, and ideas on how it could be done better.

But he hopes AIC NSW can be a “critical friend” to PEXA. “I would hope to build

a strong relationship with them, as Chris and others have had, to continue that work.”

AML/CTF

He appreciates the burden of AML/CTF compliance, having been through it in the UK. We’re at a “pain point” now, but in time it should become routine practice.

“Is it fair? Well, you don’t want to be acting for people who are laundering money. Who pays for it? The client... and you set your prices accordingly.”

Insurance

Another pressing issue is the cost of professional indemnity insurance. Jonathan had already scheduled an early meeting with stakeholders.

“I know that Chris has been involved for many years with insurers, understanding their thinking, and how their risk profiles can be translated back into advice for practitioners. That’s something I expect to carry on with.”

Education

He also expects to continue AIC NSW support of tertiary courses for student conveyancers and continuing professional education.

“Someone said to me, a professional qualification is like passing your driving test: only then do you really learn to drive,” he said. “I know that the AIC NSW wants to play a part in that; I hope they’ll be able to.”

Opportunities could include more conferences, events, and webinars with CPD points.

Overall, Jonathan wants to make these first weeks his own learning experience, consulting closely with AIC NSW President Jennie Tonner and other Council members.

“I don’t want to be running before I can walk,” he said. “I have to be conscious of bringing people with me on this journey.”

A rehearsal, as it were, for the amateur singer. We can only hope his performance is like Beethoven’s Symphony No.9: *An Ode To Joy*. **C.**

Tonner backs Smithers to guide next chapter

AIC NSW president offers her full support to the new CEO

AIC NSW president Jennie Tonner has welcomed the appointment of Jonathan Smithers as the new CEO.

“Jonathan’s exceptional leadership experience, deep understanding of the legal and professional services sectors, and proven track record of leading respected national organisations make him uniquely qualified to help guide our Institute into its next chapter,” Tonner said.

“This is an exciting time for AIC NSW. I look forward to working alongside Jonathan, our Board and our members as we

continue to elevate the conveyancing profession to the standard and reputation it deserves.

“Together, we will strengthen the position of conveyancers as trusted professionals and further establish AIC NSW as the authoritative voice of conveyancing for industry, peak bodies, government and consumers alike.”

The appointment reflects AIC NSW’s ongoing commitment to professional excellence, advocacy, consumer confidence and the advancement of conveyancing as a trusted and respected profession, Tonner said.



AIC NSW president Jennie Tonner with new CEO Jonathan Smithers.

Victorian-based developer Peter Simms is the founder of Land Title Communities.

IT

By SAM McKEITH
Photos NEIL BENNETT

'S A SMALL WORLD

New 'micro suburbs' shaking up retirement property market

A Victorian developer says an innovative housing model for downsizers based on long-term leases marks a new era in affordable homes

Peter Simms believes Australia can do a lot better on lifestyle property developments.

It's why Simms, a Victorian-based developer, has pioneered a new housing model that he said delivers more peace of mind – and affordability – for downsizers.

He calls it the country's "first true micro suburb model for downsizers where residents not only own their home but also have a registered interest in the land it sits on".

The big difference to the status quo, he said, is that the projects give residents ownership of homes as well as long-duration registered leasehold titles that run for more than 250 years. "This is about fixing a broken system," Simms, founder of Land Title Communities, told AC.

"For too long, Australians have been told they can downsize into retirement living but, in reality, they're giving up one of the most important things they have ever owned – their land.

"People think they're buying into security but, in many cases, they're not actually owning the land. That creates long-term uncertainty.

"The reality is people are selling the family home, often their biggest asset, and moving into arrangements that don't offer the same level of control or security."

With four developments underway in Victoria, Simms said the company is just getting going. He wants to expand operations nationwide to play his part in easing the housing crisis.

Key to the model's broad utility, he added, is that it creates small, master-planned communities on underused land with fast construction and smart-sized homes at low cost.

"We could have a three-bedroom, two-bathroom with a townhouse size block leasehold lot, let's say of 260 square metres, for really around the \$400,000 mark," he said.

The efforts come as the Albanese government continues to grapple with the chronic housing shortage. It's currently racing to meet its target of 1.2 million new builds by mid-2029.

The government, which made tackling the crisis a key plank of its 2025 election campaign, has so far completed 307,635 homes, leaving it about 100,000 homes

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Land Title Communities projects give residents ownership of homes as well as long-duration registered leasehold titles that run for more than 250 years.



“Most landlords who I speak to would happily offer a two, three or even five-year lease if they had confidence the tenant would pay rent on time, look after the property, and that the lease would provide genuine certainty for both parties.”

– Goro Gupta, CEO of Ethical Property Investments

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behind schedule. As a result, it needs to build more than 274,000 homes each year, about 69,000 per quarter.

The squeeze, along with interest rate rises and stubbornly high demand, has pushed housing affordability to record lows.

Nationwide, house prices have surged by roughly 40 per cent over the past five years, according to official data, with values in major cities such as Sydney sitting at up to 14 times the average income.

Against this backdrop, public and private sectors have been looking for innovative solutions. Prefab and modular housing kits, build-to-rent schemes, equity share models and tiny houses have all been proposed as ways to help improve the situation on the ground.

Diaswati Mardiasmo, chief economist at PRD Real Estate, sees potential in the model being pioneered by Simms.

Mardiasmo points, for instance, to upfront costs potentially being 30 to 50 per cent lower compared with buying freehold residential property.

There are also usually speedier delivery times, the property expert said. It “can be delivered in months not years”.

Another upside, she said, is that the type of development suits an ageing population.

“The assumption is that an ageing population can need a much smaller space, even with less amenities, in return for

lower costs and higher security,” she told AC. “This is in comparison to say a family with small children and pets, who are assumed to be needing more space and amenities.”

Mardiasmo’s conclusion is that “long-term land lease can be a strong part of the housing solution especially for downsizers and lower income households. However, it’s not one size fits all and must be paired with other delivery methods”.

Goro Gupta, CEO of Ethical Property Investments, agrees that long-term residential leases could have a part to play in tackling housing issues across the country.

According to Melbourne-based Gupta, a big challenge, however, is that landlords are often dissuaded from offering longer terms due to a lack of certainty under current laws.

“Most landlords who I speak to would happily offer a two, three or even five-year lease if they had confidence the tenant would pay rent on time, look after the property, and that the lease would provide genuine certainty for both parties,” Gupta related to AC.

“Over the past few years, we’ve strengthened tenant protections, which is important. However, in some cases, the balance has shifted to the point where landlords feel they carry more of the risk.

“If a tenant can exit a long-term lease relatively easily, many landlords



understandably question the value of offering one in the first place.”

He urges lawmakers to look overseas, especially to Europe, for how to rework the area.

Germany and Switzerland, for instance, have some of the lowest home ownership rates in the region, with incentives skewed towards long-term renting, according to University of Queensland urban planning academic Dorina Pojani.

Fixed-term tenancies there can range up to 30 years, providing security for tenants, while strong tenant protections also make renting in those countries more attractive.

This contrasts with Australia, where an average initial fixed rental agreement is 12 months.

Indeed, very few renters have a fixed-term lease that runs for even two years (six



per cent) or longer (five per cent), according to consumer group Choice.

A fifth of renters are on a rolling or periodic lease and 11 per cent have a fixed-term lease for six months or less, it said.

As Gupta puts it: "In several European countries, leases of two to five years are common because both landlords and tenants have clearly defined rights and obligations, creating confidence on both sides".

"The conversation shouldn't be about whether tenants or landlords deserve more protection. It should be about creating a framework where both parties have enough certainty to commit to longer-term arrangements," he added.

Gupta's view is that, with the right fixes, "we'll see more landlords willing to offer longer leases, giving tenants the stability and peace of mind they're increasingly looking for".

George Markoski, founder of Positive Property, an investment firm, said long-term leases are already becoming more popular on the back of changing market conditions.

One part of what's going on, he said, is more demand for longer leases due to "a rental market that has been chronically undersupplied for years".

"Families want stability in a market where rents have surged and when a good tenant finds a property that works for them, they want to stay," Markoski told *AC*.

Also in play, according to the property expert, is a change in "investor consciousness".

"RBA movement is keeping borrowing costs front of mind and growing uncertainty around potential SMSF restrictions has investors thinking harder about what they can control," he said.

"A long-term lease is one of the few levers available to them right now, because it locks in income, reduces exposure to vacancy cycles and creates stability when the policy environment feels uncertain.

"Even the investors who used to fear a long lease are now starting to see it as an asset."

He sees the trend most pronounced in middle ring suburbs of major cities and in "stronger regional centres", particularly in Queensland and parts of Western Australia.

"In those markets there simply isn't enough stock for tenants to be flexible, so longer leases become a negotiating tool," he said. "Family homes in good school catchments are where you're seeing the longest commitments because families have the most to lose from being displaced mid-lease."

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“RBA movement is keeping borrowing costs front of mind and growing uncertainty around potential SMSF restrictions has investors thinking harder about what they can control.”

– George Markoski, founder of Positive Property

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

Simms agreed, saying long-duration registered leasehold titles provide peace of mind.

The concept was formed, he said, after seeing caravan parks being redeveloped in the early 2000s, a change that left many retirees with homes but nowhere secure to place them.

“That was a turning point,” he said. “I saw firsthand how vulnerable people were when they didn’t have land security.”

When it comes to lease durations, the company, founded in 2005, initially offered

99-year terms but then “people started asking what happens after 99 years”.

Simms discovered potential buyers, including those with heritage from places such as China where a property history can stretch thousands of years, wanted land for much longer.

It prompted the company to offer lease terms starting at 250 years on its developments, which are located at Cowes, Portland, St Leonards and Wyndham Cove.

Simms said with demand strong, the company has its sights set on expansion.

“The limitation is the locations we’ve got, it’s only for those particular spots that we have,” he said.

“However, if we had more areas within the state or the country, it would open up for a lot more people,” he said, noting Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia as target markets.

“Queensland is the next cab off the rank but there’s a lot to do in Victoria – there’s hundreds of thousands of homes that they need to get built and there are some great spots.”



“Your home is not just a structure, it represents security, independence and peace of mind. When people downsize, they shouldn’t feel like they’re stepping backwards.”

– Developer Peter Simms

Developer Peter Simms wants to expand operations nationwide to play his part in easing the housing crisis.



Shakila Maclean, owner of All Hours Conveyancing and president of the Australian Institute of Conveyancers Victorian division, said many older clients are looking for smaller, lower-maintenance homes such as single-level units, townhouses or apartments.

She said lifestyle developments are likely to become increasingly popular, provided they remain affordable and offer flexibility for residents.

“We find buyers are often attracted by the lower-maintenance lifestyle,

community facilities and the opportunity to remain independent,” she said.

“There’s also the very practical appeal of less maintenance and, let’s be honest, who doesn’t like the idea of never having to mow the lawn again?”

But she cautions older house hunters to understand exactly what they’re buying into.

This should include review of the property’s legal structure - whether it is freehold, strata, leasehold or license arrangements – as well as fees for management,

maintenance, exit or deferred management. Other important considerations are restrictions on property selling or transferring, services and facilities included and whether there are refurbishment obligations on selling.

“Retirement developments aren’t quite the same as a standard residential purchase,” Maclean said.

“They often have their own contractual arrangements and ongoing obligations, so it’s important to understand exactly what you’re signing up for before you commit.”

Prospective buyers should seek independent legal advice before signing, she added.

Understanding the financial commitments, exit arrangements and any restrictions upfront “can help avoid unexpected costs or surprises later on”.

The comments come amidst reports of dodgy dealing in retirement property.

These include claims of “cunningly designed rip-offs” and “corporatised elder abuse” by some players targeting vulnerable elderly members of the community.

Housing for the Aged Action Group, an organisation specialising in the housing needs of older people, warns buyers to be on high alert.

It said Australian seniors should act with caution in the booming “over-55 communities” market, including in projects referred to as “lifestyle communities” or “lifestyle villages”.

For instance, it says buyers can be under the impression that they’re getting into retirement villages when the projects are actually governed by state caravan park laws.

“They’re essentially caravan parks, except you don’t put a caravan on the plot of land – you buy a building that sits on it,” HAAG said.

“And, as with caravans, you don’t buy the land – you rent it, sometimes on a short lease.

“The developer retains full ownership of the land and once it appreciates in value can decide to do something else with it. In at least some states it can serve a notice to vacate with six months’ notice,” it warned.

“Residents in this situation have sometimes been forced to cut the building into pieces small enough to go on the back of a truck and take it somewhere else.”

Simms, by contrast, said his projects are about building “not just a home but a future”.

“Your home is not just a structure, it represents security, independence and peace of mind,” he said.

“When people downsize, they shouldn’t feel like they’re stepping backwards.” **C.**



What's Next?

14 speakers

AUSTRALIAN CONVEYANCER

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REFLECT

Captains of the conveyancing and property sectors mull over the year we've had, then we explore the implications across the board in 2027.

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Time to get your brain ticking over to ponder the art of the possible. Prime your business for the crucial next steps.

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AUSTRALIAN
CONVEYANCER.

Chatswood
conveyancer
Lydia Chen,
of Brightstone
Conveyancing.

A day in the life of conveyancer Lydia Chen

By *RICHARD CUNNINGHAM*

Photos *ADAM TAYLOR*

Lydia Chen is the principal at Brightstone Conveyancing in Sydney's Chatswood. It's a busy, fixed-fee practice with five staff including an accountant based in their associated city law office. Lydia allowed AC to record a typical day at the office and revealed what drives her work ethic

9am

Lydia Chen's day was beginning in a manner familiar to many conveyancers: with coffee and a minor crisis.

The crisis: the downstairs café's coffee grinder was broken. Only chai, hot chocolate or juice. We found another place for our caffeine fix.

That was Lydia's first sustenance of the day. She doesn't eat breakfast or lunch, maybe just a snack.

"It's not for my weight," she explained. "If I have rice or noodles even in the morning, it makes me quite sleepy. I want to keep myself fresh, sharp. The coffee will do."

9.30am

We're back in her fifth-floor office overlooking Chatswood's Railway St. It's sparsely furnished, almost clinical: a place for work, not lounging. Wall clocks show the time in Sydney, London, Seoul and Beijing.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22







CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

It's wrong to suggest her days begin at 9am. She starts work at home from 5am after getting to bed after midnight.

"Four hours sleep is enough," she said. "I don't need an alarm, I wake at 5am automatically."

Emails come first but she doesn't reply in the wee small hours as that might suggest poor time management.

She fires them off from say, 5.06am, "because that makes me look better!"

10am

We meet her colleagues: Sophie, Christina and Lynn. Lydia attacks the latest emails and returns calls, often speaking in Mandarin.

About 50 per cent of her clientele are



"People ask, does reading 1000 pages make you sleepy? I say no! Reading a contract keeps me awake."

— Lydia Chen

Chinese speakers. Lydia was born on the mainland, attended university there but emigrated with her parents about 20 years ago. She completed a Masters in Accounting at Sydney University and thought that would be her career.

But an early mentor, a Chinese criminal lawyer, saw her as a people person, not a number-cruncher.

"After the first week he said, 'I think you should do conveyancing'. Because I like talking!"

She learnt the trade at David Winning's Your Move Conveyancing (also Chatswood-based), gained her diploma at Macquarie University and started her business a couple of years ago.



10.30am

Lydia doesn't just love talking but also reading: 1000-page contracts, on two big desktop monitors. "I want bigger ones!"

"People ask, does reading 1000 pages make you sleepy? I say no! Reading a contract keeps me awake."

She tested AI to read contracts but "I don't like it. I have to personalise the client's needs in my contract reviews and AI can't do it".

Lydia might, however, use ChatGPT to take a photo of an old, ornate but almost unreadable document and translate it into modern text.

Her trusted software is triConvey. "It's very efficient. Especially for accounting, to



Lydia Chen reviews a contract with colleague Sophie at the Brightstone office in Chatswood.

monitor the trust fund, and very good for AML."

11am

We tear her away for a photo shoot but the mobile remains at hand and incoming calls take priority.

"If you call me at home around 8pm, 9pm, I don't think you're annoying," she said. "I think you definitely need my help."

She has two boys, aged 9 and 3. The elder wonders why she's always on the phone ("I'm helping people") and he pays attention.

"He asks, 'Mum, what's an easement? What's sewerage?'"

1pm

As noted, Lydia doesn't do lunch unless it's business. She's not a complete ascetic: "If friends stop by and want to go out for a glass of bubbly, I will."

Her main meal is dinner at home, often prepared by, and shared with her in-laws.

"I definitely choose spicy food. I like pepper, chilli and Szechuan cooking."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

Lydia's mum lives in Chatswood, while her in-laws live near her northern suburbs home. It's a Chinese thing, she explains. You want your family close enough to help each other but not under the same roof. It's the 'chicken soup rule'. "If you live close enough to deliver hot chicken soup, say a five or 10-minute drive, that's close enough."

3pm

Lydia has pushed back a face-to-face meeting with clients. She's happy to do this story but customer privacy comes first.

Brightstone especially values building



"If it's urgent, the kids will come first. But if it's urgent for the client, the client comes first."

— Lydia Chen

trust and ongoing relationships with clients and referees.

It handles about 500 cases a year. Lydia promotes the business through social media and charges a fixed fee. Initial contract reviews are free.

AML/CTF compliance has added to cost pressures, but Lydia is loath to increase her prices. "I don't feel the client should be required to pay it."

Chinese customers often need to have the new rules explained in detail, especially if there's money coming from overseas.

"It would be the most frequent question I get, every single day," she said.



Lydia Chen works collaboratively with her team, including Sophie (left) and Christina (below).

"I really enjoy being a conveyancer. It's the most positive area in law: always helping the client. I get happiness, through helping."

– Lydia Chen

"I tell clients not to worry, it won't stop the transaction. You just have to make true statements."

She doesn't view real estate on behalf of clients. That's for agents and brokers. For Lydia it's all about the contract.

"If you see the property, it's personal," she said.

"The buyer might care about the noise, the sunlight, but the contract is black and white. You accept it or you walk away."

Her favourite part of the process? "Settlement Day."

5pm

The staff will be thinking about going home. Lydia usually hangs in until 6pm, which is not a bad idea given Chatswood's traffic.

"If a client is busy at their office and they can only see me after 6pm or 7pm... OK, I can wait," she said.

That might mean getting home at 9pm, her children already in bed and dinner served by the in-laws.

"I'm very grateful for their help," she said. "Would I do the same for my kids? I don't know."

Ask Lydia about the work-life balance and it seems work might have the edge, although she aims to keep weekends clear for family activities.

"If it's urgent, the kids will come first. But if it's urgent for the client, the client comes first," she said.

Even if she won the lottery, Lydia says she wouldn't quit.

"I really enjoy being a conveyancer," she said.

"It's the most positive area in law: always helping the client. I get happiness, through helping." **C.**



Moving the dial

Game-changing
words and numbers
that impacted the
industry this month

“

“This is a challenge (falling property prices) that is likely to take the better part of a generation to resolve.”

– National Australia Bank
chief economist Sally Auld

“

“While private sector houses were down 4.2 per cent, this came off June, which had the most approved since September 2021.”

– ABS head of construction
statistics Daniel Rossi



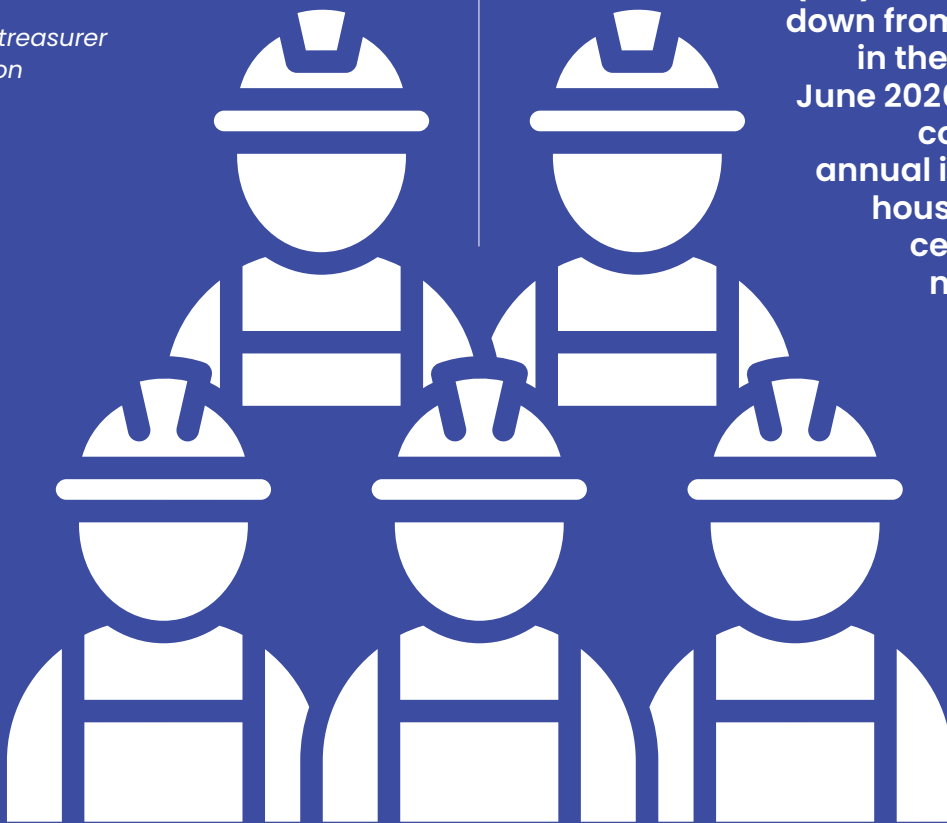
“AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES ALREADY STRUGGLING TO PAY THEIR BILLS ARE NOW SITTING AT THE KITCHEN TABLE WATCHING THE VALUE OF THEIR BIGGEST ASSET, THEIR FAMILY HOME, FALL THROUGH THE FLOOR.”

– Shadow treasurer
Tim Wilson



3.5%

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 3.5 per cent, down from 3.8 per cent in the 12 months to June 2026. The largest contributors to annual inflation were housing (+5.0 per cent), food and non-alcoholic beverages (+3.2 per cent) and recreation and culture (+2.6 per cent).



“AUSTRALIA HAS A 1.2 MILLION HOME TARGET. WHAT IT STILL LACKS IS A 140,000 WORKER PLAN. PERHAPS IT IS TIME FOR THE ‘TEN POUND TRADIE’.”

– David Simon, executive director at Integral Private Wealth



-3.6%



The total number of dwellings approved fell 3.6 per cent in July to 17,687, according to seasonally adjusted data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.



"Only if house prices kept falling at their recent rate for another nine months, until April 2027, would the annual decline reach 7.9 per cent and become comparable with the global financial crisis."

– Nerida Conisbee, chief economist for Ray White Group



"The demand for new homes remains strong but current economic conditions are making it harder for households to commit to new builds and harder for the industry to bring that supply forward."

– Michael Roberts, executive director Housing Industry Association Queensland

"NSW CAN'T TAX ITS WAY TO PROSPERITY AND THE BEST RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN THE INTERGENERATIONAL REPORT IS TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR BUSINESSES TO INVEST, BUILD AND CREATE JOBS."

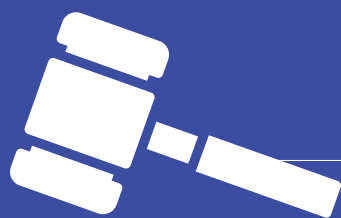
– Katie Stevenson, NSW executive director Property Council of Australia



"Potential vendors looking at the market right now, they're seeing weakness. They're seeing home values going backwards across the country and they're seeing pressures on the demand side."

– Gerard Burg, research director at Cotality





= 32.3%

Auction volumes remain well below last year's levels, down 32.3 per cent compared to the same week last year. This softer trend defined much of this winter's auction market, with capital city volumes ending the season about 18 per cent lower than winter 2022. The annual decline was concentrated in the largest markets, with winter volumes down approximately 25 per cent in Sydney, 19 per cent in Melbourne, and 14 per cent in the ACT. In contrast, Perth, Adelaide, and Brisbane saw increases of 20 per cent, 6.9 per cent, and 0.4 per cent respectively.

***“RENT ISN'T CHEAPER
WHEN YOU'RE 23.
GROCERIES AREN'T
CHEAPER. ELECTRICITY
ISN'T CHEAPER. YET
YOUNG PEOPLE ARE
EXPECTED TO
SURVIVE ON THE
LOWEST PAYMENT
IN THE SYSTEM.”***

– Anglicare Australia executive
director Kasy Chambers

STRANGE DEEDS: TITLE TRAPS FOR UNWARY BUYERS

By RICHARD CUNNINGHAM

3. The tenants will not smoke anywhere on the property nor will permit any guests or visitors to smoke on the property. Tenants will buy the landlord a birthday present.

4. The property is provided to the tenants with the following:

1. Front top left bedroom – curtains with pole, single bed with

AND ALSO EXCEPTING AND RESERVING unto the transferors and their successors in title full and freed right for every person who is at any time entitled to an estate or interest in possession of the land hatched blue on the said plan or any part thereof with which the right shall be capable of enjoyment and every person authorised by him to go, pass and re-pass at all times and for all purposes with or without animals or vehicles or both over the land hatched green on the said plan from or to the land hatched blue on the said plan or any part thereof. The land to which the benefit of the aforesaid easement is appurtenant is the land hatched blue on the said plan or any part thereof. The land which is subject of the burden of the said easement is the land hatched green on the said plan. AND the transferee for itself and its successors in title covenants with the transferors and their successors in title that the transferee and its successors in title shall not and no one more of them shall maintain use or operate the railway sidings upon the land hatched red upon the said plan or any of them or permit any person other than the transferors their successors in title and persons authorised by them to maintain use or operate the said sidings or any of them and it and its successors in title shall not and no one or more of them shall construct use or maintain new or additional railway sidings upon the said land hatched red or any part thereof or permit any person other than the transferors their successors in title and persons authorised by them to construct use or maintain new or additional railway sidings upon the said land hatched red or any part thereof or run or permit to be run except as aforesaid engine, wagon or carriage upon any such sidings as aforesaid for as long as the land hatched blue on the said plan or any part thereof is held in fee simple by any one or more of the following persons, namely the transferors their wives, widows, children or any limited liability companies in which a majority of the shares is held

From bans on pets to bizarre historical anomalies, restrictive covenants are often lurking in the fine print of a title so it's vital for conveyancers to remain vigilant

Imagine buying a house and finding out, post settlement, that you're not allowed to build a nuclear reactor on the site.

OK, that's an extreme example, but allegedly a real case of a "restrictive covenant" placed on a UK property.

More common are restrictions on operating a brickworks, coal mine, tannery, fish processing plant or butchery. Even when the property is an upstairs flat.

Others include bans on fairground rides, caravans, bear baiting pits, boxing booths or brothels.

It's not unusual to find restrictions on raising pigs, chickens and racing pigeons. However, there's a lease that specified "the tenants may keep one hamster".

Another, that a flat couldn't be rented to "lunatics or anyone of ill repute".

In Britain, such bizarre clauses and oddities have survived for decades, even centuries.

But a UK tenancy agreement as recent as 2019 allegedly had this, as a rider to a no-smoking rule: "Tenants will buy the landlord a birthday present."

In a similar vein, a Queensland real estate agency offered, in 2021, to facilitate

an exchange of Christmas gifts between tenants and landlords, saying "we just wanted to do a nice thing, that's all".

Australia's restrictive covenants are usually designed to protect the amenity of a neighbourhood, like bans on pets or hanging washing from the balcony.

Dawn Barry, of Victoria's Skilled Conveyancing, knows of a rural subdivision where grass had to be kept to a specific height.

It's not unique. The usual stipulation is turf no longer than 200mm.

Casey Arslan, of NP Conveyancing in Pottsville NSW, said the local Koala Beach subdivision (see opposite page) requires owners to drape a 50mm rope into their swimming pools.

Why? "To allow the native animals to escape should they fall in the water," Arslan added.

Debbie Hutton, from Devonport's Debbie Hutton Conveyancing, cited a local example banning "pigs, greyhounds or racing pigeons". "This one amuses me," she said. "So, we can have goats or sheep?"

Another forbids the use of recycled materials (even bricks) or building a house

on the land for less than \$8000, which should be easy to comply with.

Obviously outdated but still on the title.

"In Tasmania, they're contained in the Schedule of Easements," Hutton said, "and generally carry through all the subsequent subdivisions."

Susanne Mosely, of Hunter Legal & Conveyancing in NSW, cited one that appears to dictate the purchaser's diet.

"Minimal homegrown produce," it reads, "is to be limited to 10 per cent fruit and vegetable intake on any Burdened Lot".

Di Cooke, of Verve Conveyancing, found another for what is now a standard residential block in New Lambton NSW that dictates rules for railway sidings and passage "with or without" animals and by "wagons or carriers".

"There is no way that the property would be used for such purposes now, even though the covenant remains registered over the property title," Cooke said.

It also carries to the "wives, widows and children" of the landholders. "Perhaps it was the case that the land was held by a man, or men, only!" she added.

Covenants might not be on a title but nonetheless enforced by local authorities.

Sydney's historic "garden suburb" of Haberfield, for example, has strict codes to preserve its Federation architecture.

They were created in the early 1900s by developer Richard Stanton but are now part of local planning rules.

For example, roofs must be of slate or unglazed Marseille tiles and driveways of twin tracks with grass, garden or gravel between.

Elsewhere, restrictions may be governed by whether the property is strata or Torrens Title.

If strata, the owners corporation will enforce the law. Those with Torrens Title might think they're king of their castle... but not always.

Torrens guarantees ownership but a

restrictive covenant on a title "runs with the land".

In other words, the benefit and burden of the covenant relate to the land itself, and not to the owner of that land.

A restrictive covenant might be removed by appeal to the beneficiary, the local council, planning minister or Supreme Court. However, that would be a costly, complex and time-consuming process.

Better not to be caught out in the first place. That's where a conveyancer's work is vital.

Their job is to look out for "encumbrances, caveats and notices" on property titles, especially those hidden in the fine print.

"While they may just look like another notation on a title or clause in an 88b, their impact on how a property can be used, developed or enjoyed can be significant," Mosely says.

"A good conveyancer knows what to look for, recognising when something doesn't quite fit, asking the right questions and making sure the client understands exactly what they're buying."

"It means going the extra mile to protect our clients. Because when it comes to property, the unusual details are often the ones worth investigating."

Like that ban on backyard nukes. Some vendors are such spoilsports. **C.**

"A good conveyancer knows what to look for, recognising when something doesn't quite fit, asking the right questions and making sure the client understands exactly what they're buying."

– Susanne Mosely



KOALA BEACH ESTATE: HOW RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS ARE PROTECTING KOALAS

Koala Beach Estate is a residential development between Pottsville and Hastings Point on the NSW Tweed Coast.

The former cattle property has more than 500 homes, with 270ha or 74 per cent of the land reserved for nature conservation.

It's home to koalas and at least 24 threatened species. Their protection is governed by strict covenants, including:

- A 40kmh speed limit;
- Restrictions on dogs and cats;
- Preservation of koala food trees; and
- A 300mm gap under fences for free passage of fauna.

The most interesting is this: "By means of a Covenant under Section 88B of the Conveyancing Act 1919, all swimming pools installed by future residents of the Koala Beach Estate must

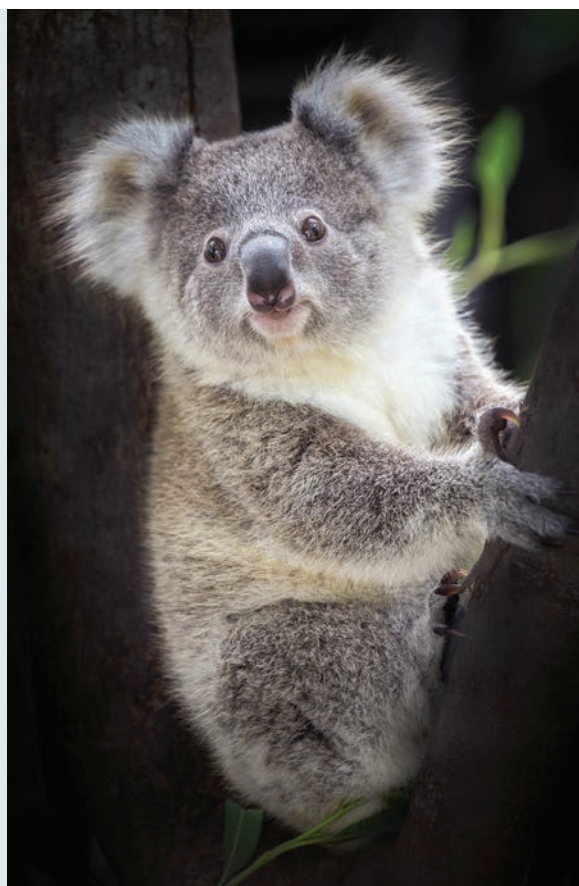
include a stout rope (minimum of 50mm diameter), one end of which is to be secured to a stable poolside fixture, the other end of which must trail in the pool at all times."

The aim is to enable koalas that might fall or venture into a pool to climb out again.

The rules are enforced by Tweed Shire Council under a 58-page Koala Plan of Management.

"I advise my clients that while covenants remain registered on title, they need to be followed," said local conveyancer Casey Arslan, of NP Conveyancing.

It seems to be working well. Koala Beach Estate has been hailed as a model for koala-friendly development and even became part of the curriculum for the North Coast TAFE diploma of Business and Real Estate.



Dwelling values

Date range 12 months to 30 Aug 2026

Home values fell across 93 per cent of capital city suburbs through winter, with every capital except Darwin recording a decline over the quarter. Cotality's national Home Value Index fell 0.9 per cent in August, the fifth consecutive month of decline. "What started as a more concentrated easing across higher-value segments has now become a much more generalised softening," said Cotality's research director Tim Lawless. The nation's median dwelling price was \$912,885.

Sydney



Sydney's median dwelling price is now \$1,222,718, down 1.4 per cent for the month and down 4.6 per cent for the year. Significant August sales included 3 Augusta St, Strathfield for \$9,150,000.

Melbourne



Melbourne values were down 1.1 per cent for the month, off 4.7 per cent for the year, with the median dwelling price now \$786,718. Significant Victorian sales included 76 Bay Rd, Mount Martha for \$3,000,000.

Brisbane



Brisbane dwelling values were down one per cent for the month, but up 10.8 per cent for the year. The median price was \$1,080,142. Significant Queensland sales included 13 Murraba St, Currumbin for \$5,250,000.

Adelaide



Adelaide property values were down 0.8 per cent for the month, up 8.6 per cent for the year. The median dwelling value was \$937,207. Significant SA sales included 10 Wilkinson Road Parkside for \$2,563,000.

Perth



Perth remains strongest for annual price growth, up 15.6 per cent for the year but values were down 0.8 per cent in August. The median dwelling is \$999,987. Significant WA sales included 10A Solomon Street Fremantle for \$3,600,000.

Hobart



Hobart values were down 0.2 per cent in August, and also down 0.2 per cent for the quarter. A median dwelling is \$752,397. Top Tasmanian sales included 6 Leona Court Acton Park for \$952,500.

Darwin



Darwin remains the most affordable capital, values up 0.9 per cent for the quarter, 14.6 per cent for the year. A median dwelling is \$647,259. Top NT sales included 9 Macartney Street Fannie Bay for \$2,350,000.

Canberra



The national capital again saw negative growth, down 1.1 per cent in August and down 2.8 per cent for the quarter. The median dwelling value was \$864,998. Top sales included 29 Gilmore Crescent Garran for \$2,250,000.

For year **-4.6%**

Last quarter **-4.7%**

For year **-4.7%**

Last quarter **-3.9%**

For year **+10.8%**

Last quarter **-2.7%**

For year **+8.6%**

Last quarter **-1.6%**

For year **+15.6%**

Last quarter **-3.2%**

For year **+8.1%**

Last quarter **-0.2%**

For year **+14.6%**

Last quarter **+0.9%**

For year **-0.4%**

Last quarter **-2.8%**

Trent Taylor
*Owner and CEO of
Skilled Conveyancing*





‘We’re not chasing perfection – just steady and consistent progress’

Trent Taylor is the owner and CEO of Victoria-based Skilled Conveyancing, having taken over the family business in 2023. He’s also an award-winning business coach who’s determined to further develop the firm founded by his mother Dawn Barry in 1990. Currently, 100 per cent of the Skilled Conveyancing team works remotely in different regions of Victoria. When not running the business, Trent can be found working on his cattle farm, playing golf or travelling with his wife

I run a successful conveyancing firm but here’s the thing: I’m not a conveyancer or a lawyer. My background is in business leadership and coaching, and I’ve been at it since 2004.

Most conveyancers are flat out with their day-to-day files, so growing the business gets left behind.

I’m lucky. I get to work on the firm full-time. I bring fresh eyes and focus on what my role demands: generating new leads via referral partnerships and online strategies, and investing in technology and systems to simplify, as much as possible, our conveyancers’ working day.

Their focus is to be legally correct and accurate, while giving every client a great, stress-free experience.

Take AML/CTF: we were ready in early June. We got organised early, systemised all we had to do and trained the team. Now compliance isn’t a problem, it’s just part of what we do.

At SC we live by *kaizen* [a Japanese business philosophy], which means ‘constant and never-ending improvement’.

We’re not chasing perfection – just steady and consistent progress. In our monthly performance reviews, we ask

until we are clear on the one thing you can do to get one per cent better this month. Those one-percenters compound into big change over a year.

My advice? Look at the opportunity, not the problem. The property market’s hard currently. A lot of people are gripped by fear and conveyancers are waiting for the phone to ring.

Don’t.

Use the quiet time to review and improve your systems, clean up your database, train the team and talk to your network to offer your help.

Reach out to your referral partners to ask how you can help them separate from doing conveyancing for their clients.

Open the conversation and show gratitude when they send leads your way. I am still amazed how many referral partners tell me they never get thanked by conveyancers.

And grow your team. Spread the skills and responsibility. I’m always asking: what can we do to build their confidence in each facet of their role?

I was taught, and now believe, if you want a great team, then as a leader just do these three things: acknowledge them, include them and appreciate them.



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AML/CTF Check-In Session 3

Join our next Check-In event this September to get your Tranche 2 questions answered by a state-by-state panel.



Tuesday, 15 September 2026



10:30AM - 12:00PM AEST



Online



1.5 CPD

SPEAKERS

- Richard Storey, Grant Thornton AU
- Jennie Tonner, AICNSW
- Shakila Maclean, AICVIC
- Alicia Edwards, Colwell Conveyancing
- Mark Pinto, triSearch

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