

*A guide for international investors buying
residential property in Australia*



Australian Residential Property Guide

2022-23

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LIVING IN AUSTRALIA

Where is Australia located and what is the weather like?

Australia is a lifestyle destination, a transparent safe-haven, with a stable economic and political environment.

Location



Australia is located in the Southern and Eastern Hemispheres with six states and two territories in the Pacific region. The capital city of Australia is Canberra, although Sydney is regarded as the financial hub of Australia.

Population



The number of people living in Australia grew by 0.2% in 2021; to 25.74 million. In 2019, prior to the pandemic, annual population growth was 1.5%. The three most populated cities are Sydney (5.4 million), Melbourne (5.1 million) and Brisbane (2.6 million).

Time zone



Australia's mainland states and territories are divided into five standard time zones with daylight saving time being observed from October to April; with the exception of Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Weather



The climate varies considerably across Australia, but generally has four temperate weathered seasons compared to other countries.

Each year, Summer is from December to February; Autumn is March to May; Winter is June to August and Spring is from September to November.

Average Flying Time from the Australian East Coast

Direct International Flights

8 HOURS
SINGAPORE

9 HOURS
KUALA LUMPUR

9 HOURS
HONG KONG

10 HOURS
SHANGHAI

12 HOURS
BEIJING

MAJOR EVENTS IN AUSTRALIA

Which major cultural and sporting events take place in Australia?

SUMMER

December
January
February

- Carols in the Domain [Sydney]
- Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race [Sydney + Hobart]
- Australian Open Tennis [Melbourne]
- Nutri-Grain IronMan and IronWoman Series [Gold Coast]
- Sydney Festival [Sydney]
- Chinese New Year Festival [all Cities]
- Magic Millions racehorse sales [Gold Coast]

AUTUMN

March
April
May

- Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix [Melbourne]
- Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras [Sydney]
- Longines Golden Slipper Day [Sydney]
- The Royal Easter Show [Sydney]
- Rip Curl Pro Bells Beach [Melbourne]
- Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week [Sydney]
- Gold Coast International Boat Show [Gold Coast]

WINTER

June
July
August

- VIVID [Sydney]
- Bridge to Brisbane [Brisbane]
- City2Surf fun run [Sydney]
- Oz Comic-con [Melbourne]
- International Film Festival [Melbourne]
- International Boat Show [Sydney]
- Shimano MTB Grand Prix Race [Brisbane]

SPRING

September
October
November

- Spring Fashion Week [Melbourne]
- Oz Comic-Con [Sydney + Brisbane]
- Melbourne Cup [Melbourne]
- Sydney Marathon [Sydney]
- Sculptures by the Sea [Sydney]
- Spring Racing Carnival [Sydney]
- Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix [Melbourne]

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF AUSTRALIA

*Who lives in Australia, where were they born
and what is their religion?*



Age Distribution

Australian residents are primarily young to middle aged.

In 2021, 33.4% of the population was aged between 15 and 39 years old; compared to the national average of 27.8% for this age group.

The median age of the population in Australia was 38 years, similar to the national average five years earlier.

Children aged 0-14 years comprised 18.2% while people aged 65+ years made up 17.2% of the population.



Multiculturalism

The Australian population comprised 33.1% of people being born outside of Australia, lower than the national average of 33.3% in 2016.

The most prominent countries of birth include England (3.6%), India (2.6%), China Mainland (2.2%), New Zealand (2.1%) and the Philippines (1.2%).

In addition, approximately 36.7% of parents in Australia were born overseas in 2021, higher than the national average (34.4%) five years ago.



Religion

The Catholic religion was practiced by 20.0% of Australian residents at the time of the Census 2021, this was followed by Anglican at 9.8%, then Islam with 3.2%.

No religion was the most common response in Australia with 38.4% of the population in 2021. This rose from 29.6% in 2016.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF AUSTRALIA

What are the common languages spoken in Australia homes, how are they educated and what industries are they occupied in?



Language

Aside from English, Mandarin (2.7%) is the most common language spoken in an Australian household.

Other typical languages include Arabic (1.4%), Vietnamese (1.3%), Cantonese (1.2%) and Punjabi (0.9%).

Australian households where a non-English language is used comprised 24.8% in 2021, compared to five years ago when it was 23.7%.



Education

In Australia, 30.8% of the population were attending an educational institution at the time of the 2016 Census.

Of these, 26.7% were in primary school, 20.1% in secondary school and 22.0% in a tertiary or technical institution.

Looking at people aged 15 and over in Australia, 15.7% reported having completed Year 12 as their highest level of educational attainment, 15.7% had completed a Certificate III or IV and 8.9% had completed an Advanced Diploma or Diploma.

A total of 22.0% had a Bachelor Degree level and above.



Work

The most common occupation of Australian residents is in Professional Services (at 22.2%) in the Census 2016.

Clerical and administrative workers (13.6%), technicians and trades workers (13.5%) and managers (13.0%) were the next most common occupations.

Of all the employed people in Australia, 3.9% worked in hospitals.

Other major industries of employment were supermarket and grocery stores (2.4%), cafés and restaurants (2.4%) and primary education (2.2%).

STUDYING IN AUSTRALIA

What is the school and university platform for International students in Australia?

Australia provides a world-class education system with many exceptional schools and universities.

For international students, the Simplified Student Visa Framework (SSVF) is designed to make the process of applying for a student visa in Australia simpler to navigate via two subclasses:

Student Visa—Subclass 500 where international students can apply for a single student visa regardless of their chosen course of study.

Student Guardian Visa—Subclass 590 where student guardians can apply for the new Student Guardian Visa. All students and student guardians must lodge their visa application online by creating an ImmiAccount.

STUDYING: SCHOOL

Schools in Australia generally comprise a mix of local and international students.

The education system is broadly divided into **primary** years K-6 (aged 5-12) and **secondary** years 7-12 (aged 13-18) students.

Independent schools are financially and administratively privately operated.

Religion-based schools hold faith at the core of their education—however they continue to follow the government education curriculum.

STUDYING: UNIVERSITY

Most **universities** have a main campus with several smaller campuses located across multiple states and territories, in the Central Business District (CBD) and regional areas.

This provides a wide range of options when studying in Australia with many Australian universities also setting up campuses in major international hubs.

Many universities also offer distance and online education where students can have flexible study load (full-time or part-time) with professional recognition and graduate with the same qualification.

AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

Where are the universities in Australia accepting international students in 2023?

UNIVERSITY	WORLD RANKING	AUSTRALIA RANKING	OVERALL SCORE	INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RATIO	ACADEMIC REPUTATION
The Australian National University	30	1	82	96.0	93.6
The University of Melbourne	33	2	82	99.8	98.6
The University of Sydney	41	3	80	99.3	96.2
The University of New South Wales (UNSW)	45	4	89	91.1	97.6
The University of Queensland	=50	5	87	75.6	90.8
Monash University	57	6	72	87.6	80.8
The University of Western Australia	90	7	62	55.6	49.9
The University of Adelaide	109	8	57	52.3	35.2
University of Technology Sydney	137	9	53	41.8	66.1
University of Wollongong	=185	10	45	29.4	34.1
RMIT University	=190	11	45	36.6	55.5
The University of Newcastle, Australia (UON)	192	12	45	29.1	25.7
Curtin University	193	13	44	30.5	41.2
Macquarie University	=195	14	44	30.9	48.9
Queensland University of Technology (QUT)	=222	15	42	39.5	40.0
Deakin University	266	16	38	27.6	30.7
University of Tasmania	=293	17	36	16.5	7.5
Swinburne University of Technology	=296	18	35	13.0	16.4
Griffith University	=300	19	35	26.1	16.6
La Trobe University	316	20	34	20.8	20.9
University of South Australia	=363	21	30	21.7	12.7
Flinders University	=425	22	27	12.1	7.0
James Cook University	=461	23	26	13.9	10.2
Bond University	=481	24	25	4.4	6.3
Western Sydney University	501-510	25	NA	16.5	18.1
University of Canberra	511-520	26	NA	12.9	8.8
Murdoch University	561-570	27	NA	6.7	7.5
Central Queensland University (CQUniversity)	651-700	28	NA	7.0	10.7
University of Southern Queensland	651-700	29	NA	7.9	8.4
Charles Darwin University	701-750	30	NA	5.3	3.4
Southern Cross University	701-750	31	NA	4.1	3.5
Victoria University	701-750	32	NA	7.3	6.4
Australian Catholic University	801-1,000	33	NA	7.0	11.4
Charles Sturt University	801-1,000	34	NA	4.1	7.5
University of New England Australia	801-1,000	35	NA	10.1	6.5
University of the Sunshine Coast	1,001-1,200	36	NA	2.6	2.9
University of Notre Dame, Australia	1,201-1,400	37	NA	3.0	5.5

Defintions

World Ranking, Australia Ranking and Overall Score is the QS World University Ranking by evaluating six metrics: Academic Reputation (40%), Employer Reputation (10%), Faculty/Student Ratio (20%), Citations per faculty (20%), International Faculty Ratio (5%) and International Student Ratio (5%).

International Student Ratio is calculated on the ability to attract faculty and students from across the world, which in turn suggests that it possesses a strong international brand.

Academic Reputation is derived from collating the expert opinions of over 130,000 individuals in the higher education space regarding teaching and research quality at the world's universities.

Further information is available at www.topuniversities.com

Source: Knight Frank Research, QS Intelligence Unit

WHAT IS THE STANDARD PROCESS FOR BUYING A RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY?

The process to purchase a residential property can vary widely but the most common steps are outlined below. For further information and clarity, consult with a legal representative.

Finance Representation

Before starting the journey to purchase a residential property, carry out due diligence of the subject property and surrounding area to ensure the price expectation can be achieved with the allocated budget.

Legal Representation

Engaging a solicitor or conveyancer prior to purchasing the property is highly recommended so they can review the contract before signing, and then stay engaged throughout the process until the property settles (when the property officially changes ownership).

BUYING: AN ESTABLISHED PROPERTY

Inspect the property at an open house or by private appointment. Request a **copy of the contract** and have solicitor (or conveyancer) read it.

Gain **pre-approval** for loan from lender and confirm qualification from FIRB if required. Arrange a **pest and building** inspection to guarantee the quality of the building and be aware of

maintenance required.

Negotiate by private treaty the highest price willing to be paid for the property with the vendors (via the selling agent) or alternatively **bid at public auction**.

Holding deposit is recommended for a private treaty until cooling off ends (say, A\$1,000) until formal finance is approved; at this time the full deposit (say, 10%) is paid.

If the bid was accepted at auction, the **full deposit** is payable at this time (say, 10%) with any cooling off period now void. The deposit is generally paid by cheque or electronic transfer (private treaty only).

Contracts are signed and exchanged by both parties and it's time the solicitor (or conveyancer) finalises the formal paperwork with the lender. Loan documents are signed.

Settlement occurs when the property officially changes ownership, following one final inspection on the day and the locks are changed.

BUYING: OFF-THE-PLAN

In most cases, buying off-the-plan (OTP) is the commitment to buy a property that's not yet built. An OTP

property can sometimes be better priced than established stock.

Developers are keen to secure sales in the project so lenders will provide funding and construction can commence. There is also the potential flexibility at this time to make design changes to a house or apartment before construction begins.

In most cases a deposit, typically 10%, is paid to the developer and the remaining is paid on settlement of the property, allowing more time to save throughout the construction period.

Through this time, market forces may push market values up, at an advantage to the buyer, at the same time consideration must be made should the market slow over this time.

It's wise for this type of investment, that contracts are reviewed by legal representation and the 'sunset clause' explained, which places a deadline for the construction timeline.

Should a development not proceed, deposits will be returned, but this could be at the expense of missed interest and capital gains through other investments.

There can also be more tax depreciation available on new properties, meaning maximising benefits and improving after-tax cash flow for investment properties.

WHAT ARE THE INTERNATIONAL INVESTOR BUYING RULES?

The current rules around international buyers investing in Australian residential property aims to direct investment into new housing, increasing the housing supply and support local economic activity.

Before purchasing a residential property in Australia, all international investors must apply and be approved by the Foreign Investment Review

Board (FIRB). Different rules apply to three main investor groups:

International investor

A natural person who is not an Australian citizen and is a non-resident.

Temporary resident

A person residing in Australia and holds a temporary residency visa which

allows them to stay for continuous period of 12+ months or on a bridging visa awaiting permanent residency.

Offshore company with an Australian business

The scope of the offshore company's operations and assets in Australia would be considered before being eligible to acquire one or more properties under this category.

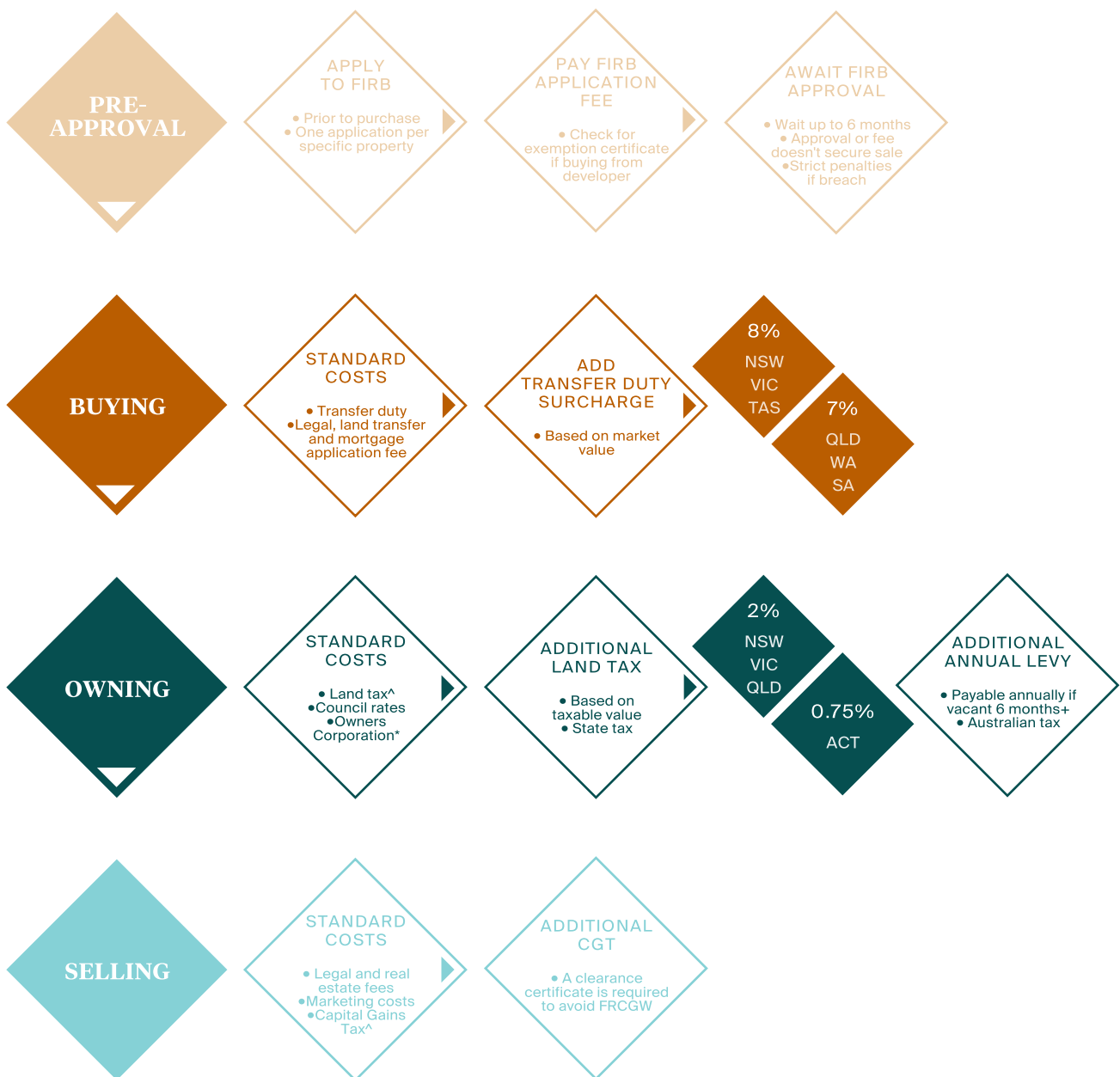
SCENARIO	INTERNATIONAL INVESTOR	TEMPORARY RESIDENT	OFFSHORE COMPANY WITH AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS
SUBMIT FIRB APPLICATION Must gain approval and pay fee before purchasing any property	YES	YES	YES
CAN BUY OFF-THE-PLAN Construction stage, new & not yet occupied	YES	YES	YES
CAN BUY OFF-THE-PLAN When another buyer has failed to reach settlement	YES	YES	YES
CAN BUY VACANT LAND If residential construction starts within 24 months	YES	YES	OA
CAN BUY ONE ESTABLISHED DWELLING With vacant possession throughout the redevelopment scheduled to increased dwelling count	YES	NO	OA
CAN BUY ONE ESTABLISHED DWELLING With no redevelopment scheduled, being main residence	NO	YES	YES
CAN BUY ONE OR MORE ESTABLISHED DWELLINGS As investment properties	NO	NO	NO
MAIN RESIDENCE Must be sold if property ceases to be main residence	N/A	YES	YES

Source: Knight Frank Research, Foreign Investment Review Board

N/A is not applicable, OA is on application

THE INTERNATIONAL INVESTOR BUYER PROCESS

What is the process for international investors when buying, owning and selling residential property in Australia as at 29 July 2022?



Source: Knight Frank Research, Australian Government, State and Territory Government

*If property is strata titled ^If owned as investment property

WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF BUYING A PROPERTY?

STANDARD COSTS

When buying property in Australia, there are both federal and state taxes and a range of fees that are implemented.

Transfer Duty

Transfer duty (also known as Stamp Duty) is levied by the state government on the purchase of property.

Legal Fee

Legal fees will vary between legal firms and may be dependent on property value. Fees range from A\$900-\$3,000 plus Goods & Services Tax (GST).

Land Transfer Fee

When a property changes ownership, a document known as a Land Transfer is lodged and registered with the NSW Office of State Revenue, and a fee is charged. This document records the change of ownership.

The cost to register the title varies in each state of Australia. A solicitor or conveyancer will perform this task on behalf of the purchaser.

Mortgage Application Fee

A fee charged by the state government for the registration of a mortgage. A lender will perform this task on behalf of the purchaser.

ADDITIONAL INTERNATIONAL BUYING COSTS

FIRB Application Fee

Before purchasing a residential property in Australia, all international investors must apply to the FIRB before the application will be processed. For most applications, the statutory timeframe is 30 days for making a decision and will not start until the correct fee has been paid at the time the application is made or notice is given.

The fees that are payable depend on the value and type of action being taken, and whether special fee rules apply. International persons are required to pay a fee for each application made, or notice given. Once a foreign investment application has been lodged through the Australian Taxation Office (the ATO) Portal, applicants will receive an on-screen confirmation containing the fee details.

It's important to note that seeking approval from the FIRB is property-specific; therefore one application per property. Also the fee on application does not provide any assurance of securing the property.



“Before purchasing a residential property in Australia, all international investors must apply to the Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB).”

“A fee is payable before the foreign investment application will be processed.”

“Seeking approval from the FIRB is property-specific; therefore one application per property.”

“The fee on application does not provide any assurance of securing the property.”



Transfer Duty Surcharge

In addition to the transfer duty, a transfer duty surcharge is payable for international investors of 8% on the market property value at the time of purchase in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania. While an additional 7% is payable for Queensland, WA and SA.

FIRB APPLICATION FEES

*What are the Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB)
application fees payable across Australia
as at 29 July 2022?*

PROPERTY VALUE (\$A)	FEE (\$A)	PROPERTY VALUE (\$A)	FEE (\$A)
\$0 - \$75,000	\$4,000	\$20,000,001 - \$21,000,000	\$528,000
\$75,001 - \$1,000,000	\$13,200	\$21,000,001 - \$22,000,000	\$554,400
\$1,000,001 - \$2,000,000	\$26,400	\$22,000,001 - \$23,000,000	\$580,800
\$2,000,001 - \$3,000,000	\$52,800	\$23,000,001 - \$24,000,000	\$607,200
\$3,000,001 - \$4,000,000	\$79,200	\$24,000,001 - \$25,000,000	\$633,600
\$4,000,001 - \$5,000,000	\$105,600	\$25,000,001 - \$26,000,000	\$660,000
\$5,000,001 - \$6,000,000	\$132,000	\$26,000,001 - \$27,000,000	\$686,400
\$6,000,001 - \$7,000,000	\$158,400	\$27,000,001 - \$28,000,000	\$712,800
\$7,000,001 - \$8,000,000	\$184,800	\$28,000,001 - \$29,000,000	\$739,200
\$8,000,001 - \$9,000,000	\$211,200	\$29,000,001 - \$30,000,000	\$765,600
\$9,000,001 - \$10,000,000	\$237,600	\$30,000,001 - \$31,000,000	\$792,000
\$10,000,001 - \$11,000,000	\$264,000	\$31,000,001 - \$32,000,000	\$818,400
\$11,000,001 - \$12,000,000	\$290,400	\$32,000,001 - \$33,000,000	\$844,800
\$12,000,001 - \$13,000,000	\$316,800	\$33,000,001 - \$34,000,000	\$871,200
\$13,000,001 - \$14,000,000	\$343,200	\$34,000,001 - \$35,000,000	\$897,600
\$14,000,001 - \$15,000,000	\$369,600	\$35,000,001 - \$36,000,000	\$924,000
\$15,000,001 - \$16,000,000	\$396,000	\$36,000,001 - \$37,000,000	\$950,400
\$16,000,001 - \$17,000,000	\$422,400	\$37,000,001 - \$38,000,000	\$976,800
\$17,000,001 - \$18,000,000	\$448,800	\$38,000,001 - \$39,000,000	\$1,003,200
\$18,000,001 - \$19,000,000	\$475,200	\$39,000,001 - \$40,000,000	\$1,029,600
\$19,000,001 - \$20,000,000	\$501,600	\$40,000,001 +	\$1,045,000

Further information is available at www.firb.gov.au | Guidance Note 10—Fees on foreign investment applications

Source: Knight Frank Research, FIRB

WHAT ARE THE COSTS WHEN OWNING A PROPERTY?

In Australia, most residential dwellings are purchased as freehold property, that is, the land and building are owned outright, in perpetuity, under the Torrens title system.

The same exists for strata title, although ownership allows individual ownership of part of a property (or 'lot'), combined with shared ownership in the remainder, or common property, through a legal entity known as the owners corporation.

STANDARD COSTS

Costs and taxes associated with the ownership of a property can vary dependent on the services the building provides.

Land Tax

Land tax is an annual state tax that is calculated based on the aggregated taxable value of all land owned (or jointly owned) by an individual. Land

Tax is not applied if the property is considered your principal residence.

Council Rates

This varies across states and local government areas. This is the tax the council charges owners for the services to the property—generally paid quarterly or annually.

Owners Corporation

If the purchased property is strata titled, an owners corporation will be established for the building. A strata titled building has common areas and facilities for the use of all occupants of the building. A regular levy must be paid to the owners corporation to maintain and repair these common areas. This can include foyers, elevators, gardens, swimming pools, gymnasiums, visitor parking areas, security and lighting. The owners corporation comprises an executive committee who make decisions on behalf of all owners, generally comprising individual apartment owners within the complex.

ADDITIONAL INTERNATIONAL OWNER COSTS

Vacant Residential Property Levy for International Owners

The Australian government charges an annual levy for foreign-owned vacant residential property (ghost tax) if the owner fails to occupy or lease for at least six (6) months of the year.

The levy is equivalent to the FIRB application fee imposed at the time the property was purchased.

Land Tax Surcharge for International Owners

The NSW, Victoria and Queensland governments impose a 2% land tax surcharge for international owners, while the ACT government has a surcharge of 0.75%.

This is payable in addition to general land tax and is based on taxable value.

WHAT ARE THE LANDLORD COSTS FOR RENTING OUT A PROPERTY?

STANDARD COSTS

Property Management Fees

Letting Fees are usually equivalent to two (2) weeks rent paid to the agent (property manager) as a fee for securing a tenant.

Management Fees cover any costs associated with managing the property and generally ranges from 7% to 8.5%, plus GST.

Utility and Service Charges

The owner generally pays for the use of utilities such as electricity, gas and water supply.

If the owner leases the property, some of these can be passed onto the tenant, but this must be stipulated in the tenancy agreement. In saying this, the owner must pay for the initial and/or replacement installation and connection costs.

Landlord Insurance

Landlord insurance is recommended and designed specifically to cover residential rental properties. Depending on the insurance provider, it protects the home from damage, theft, severe weather or rent default in some cases.

Income Tax

Income tax is payable on gross rental income, less any allowable deductions incurred in earning that income. To understand the number of potential allowable tax deductions, it is recommended an Australian Tax advisor is consulted.

The Tenancy Agreement

A tenancy agreement (lease) is a contract where the landlord (owner) allows the tenant (renter) to occupy their residential property for a specified length of time (term), in return for a regular payment (rent).

Lease application must be submitted to the property manager with proof of identity, ability to pay rent and good references.

Term of a tenancy can vary, although the standard term is six (6) months for the initial agreement. Alternate periods may be negotiable dependant on the requirements of the landlord and/or tenant.

Rent being the regular payment from the tenant, to the landlord, is normally paid via the property manager on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. Any future increases will be stated within the tenancy agreement.

Bond is an upfront lump sum security of four (4) weeks rent paid by the tenant and returned if the vacated property is left in a suitable condition.

Termination occurs when the tenancy agreement is void. However, both landlord and tenant can request to end the tenancy for several reasons with conditions met such as, suitable days notice, number of notices and reason for termination.

WHAT COSTS ARE PAYABLE WHEN SELLING A PROPERTY?

STANDARD COSTS

There are costs and taxes to consider when selling residential property in Australia.

Legal Fee

Legal fees include, but are not limited to, the costs for preparing a contract for sale.

The solicitor or conveyancer fee could be dependent on value of property, and may vary between state and territory as well as the particular solicitor chosen. The cost may range between A\$2,000 - \$4,000, plus GST.

Real Estate Agent Selling Fee

An agent fee is the commission paid by the owner, to the agent, for selling the property—either tiered or at a fixed rate.

Do ensure the breakdown of the fee structure is understood as commissions will vary between states, and price point.

Fees often range between 2% and 3% of the value of the property sold.

Marketing Costs

When an agent is selected to sell the property, the fee breakdown will often stipulate the budget associated to the marketing and advertising of the property.

Budgets for marketing, media, as well as length of advertising should all be discussed with the agent to ensure maximum advertising potential for the residential property.

Capital Gains Tax

Capital gains tax (CGT) is a federal tax levied on the gain or loss upon the sale of an investment property.

The tax is implemented on the difference between the cost of acquiring the property, and the value when sold.

The difference is then added to the income tax for the individual or company for that financial year, and taxed accordingly with those rates.

ADDITIONAL INTERNATIONAL SELLING COSTS

Foreign Resident Capital Gains Withholding

Foreign resident capital gains withholding (FRCGW) applies to vendors disposing of certain taxable property under contracts entered into from 1 July 2016.

The FRCGW tax rate is 12.5%. It also now applies to real property disposals where the contract price is A\$750,000 or more.

For contracts that are entered into from 1 July 2016 and before 1 July 2017, even if they are not due to settle until after 1 July 2017, the FRCGW withholding tax rate is 10% and applies to real property disposals where the contract price is A\$2 million and above.

For further information, contact the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

We like questions, if you've got one about our research, or would like some property advice, we would love to hear from you.



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