

BUYING OFF THE PLAN

A plain-English guide

For your first investment property,
or your first off-the-plan purchase.



**Understand the process. Check the numbers.
Ask better questions before you buy.**

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A clearer way to buy off the plan

Welcome

You do not need to become a property expert before you begin. You do need to understand what you are agreeing to, what it could cost and who can help you check it.

This guide is for you if you are considering your first investment property, or already own a property but have never bought off the plan. It takes you from the first question - "Would this suit me?" - through to getting the keys and finding a tenant.

Buying off the plan can give you access to a new home with a modern layout. It also means making a commitment before you can inspect the finished property. This book explains both sides in everyday language.

You will find small, worked examples and questions you can take to your broker, solicitor and accountant. You do not need to know every answer yourself. Your job is to make sure the important questions are answered before you commit.

A few things to know

This is general information about Australian property, not advice tailored to you. Your income, debts, ownership arrangements and the property contract can change the outcome. Property values and rents can fall, and you can lose money.

The examples are made up to explain the numbers. They are not forecasts, current loan offers or promises of returns. Amounts are in Australian dollars.

Legal and tax rules differ and can change. The key sources were checked on 6 October 2026. Ask your own advisers to confirm the rules for your purchase before signing or paying money.

Start with your budget and your questions. You can consider properties once you know what you need from one.

How to use this book

Read it in the order you need

If buying off the plan is completely new to you, start with Chapter 1. If you already own an investment property, pay particular attention to the contract, construction and future finance sections. These are where buying off the plan can feel quite different.

Just getting started? Read Chapters 1 to 3. They explain the basics, help you set a budget and identify the people who can help.

Looking at a particular property? Read Chapters 4 to 8. They cover the area, price, developer, contract and loan.

Close to a decision? Read Chapters 9 to 12, then complete the checklists and money worksheets at the back.

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Keep the guide beside you when you speak with advisers. Write down anything you do not understand and ask them to explain it with an example.

1. What does “off the plan” mean?

Agreeing now, receiving the property later

Buying off the plan means agreeing to buy a property before it is finished, or before its separate legal title is ready. The title is the official record of ownership of your particular property.

You may be shown a floor plan, a display home and computer-generated pictures. These help you imagine the result. Your contract and its attached plans and specifications explain what the seller must actually deliver.

Usually, you pay a deposit first and the balance at settlement. **Settlement** is the day the purchase is completed: the remaining money is paid and ownership transfers to you. House-and-land packages can work differently, with separate payments for the land and stages of construction.

A simple example

Imagine you agree to buy an apartment for \$750,000 with a 10% deposit. You pay \$75,000 at the time required by the contract. The remaining \$675,000 is due at settlement, along with any other costs you must pay then.

You expect to fund that balance using a loan and your own money. The lender will still need to approve the final loan. Paying the deposit does not guarantee that approval.

The deposit is part of the price, not an extra charge. It also does not normally limit what you owe if you cannot complete the purchase.

Already own a property?

With an established property, you can inspect the home that exists today. Off the plan adds a waiting period. During that time, the building, property market and your finances may change.

The key question is: “Can I complete this purchase when it is ready, even if things are different from today?”

What happens along the way?

The usual buying journey

- 1. Work out your budget.** Speak with a broker and decide how much of your own money you can use without emptying your savings.
- 2. Research the property.** Check the location, price, likely rent, developer and builder. Compare it with other properties you could buy.
- 3. Have the contract checked.** Ask your own solicitor or conveyancer to explain your commitments, protections and deadlines before you sign.
- 4. Pay the agreed deposit.** Confirm the amount, due date and who holds it. Verify payment details independently before transferring money.
- 5. Follow the build.** Keep progress updates and stay in touch with your broker. Tell your solicitor promptly about changes to the plans or completion date.
- 6. Arrange the final loan and inspection.** As completion approaches, your lender checks the property and your finances. An independent inspector checks the finished work.
- 7. Settle and take ownership.** Your settlement representative arranges the legal transfer and payments. You receive the keys and prepare the property for tenants.

Dates are estimates until the contract says otherwise

A salesperson may say a property will be ready “around Christmas”. That is different from a binding promise about when you must settle or when you can end the contract.

Ask which dates are estimates, which dates create legal obligations and what happens if the project runs late. Leave room in your plans for changes.

Keep one folder for the contract, plans, payment receipts, advice and project updates. It saves searching when a deadline arrives.

2. Decide what you want the property to do

Begin with your own life

Before looking at glossy brochures, think about why you want an investment property. Perhaps you want another source of income later in life. Perhaps you want to build wealth over many years. You may be considering a home you could eventually move into.

These goals lead to different choices. A property that suits a high-income investor who can cover a large monthly shortfall may be uncomfortable for someone with less spare cash.

Write down your main goal and when you hope to achieve it. Be specific enough to help you choose, without treating the goal as a guaranteed result.

An example of a useful goal

“I want a property I can hold for at least ten years. I can contribute up to \$600 a month from my income, and I want to keep my emergency savings separate.”

That tells you more than “I want a good investment”. You can now ask whether a property fits the monthly limit, what happens if costs rise and whether selling sooner would cause a problem.

If you already own one investment

Start with what that property costs you now. Use actual rent, repayments and bills, not the estimates you received when you bought it.

Then add the proposed property's costs. Two manageable-looking loans can become uncomfortable when both properties are empty or need repairs at the same time.

Your first three notes

- My main reason for buying is: _____
- I expect to keep the property for: _____
- The monthly amount I can comfortably contribute is: _____

A good property for someone else is not automatically a good property for you.

A comfortable budget matters more than a maximum loan

What the bank will lend and what you can live with

A lender assesses how much it may be prepared to lend. You still need to decide whether the repayments leave enough room for everyday life.

Allow for groceries, insurance, holidays and the bills that arrive only once a year. If retirement or a change in work is approaching, tell your broker. Do not base a long commitment on income that may soon stop.

Put your cash into separate amounts

The deposit: money paid towards the price under the contract.

Buying costs: items such as transfer duty, legal fees, inspections and loan costs.

Extra money needed at settlement: the rest of your contribution, including any gap if the lender lends less than expected.

Savings you keep: money for personal emergencies, vacancies, repairs and unexpected property bills.

Your emergency savings are not another amount to spend on the deposit. Keep them available after settlement.

A practical trial

If you think you can comfortably contribute \$600 a month to an investment, try setting that amount aside while you research. Does the household budget still work? Could you manage a higher amount for a while?

This is a useful reality check, not proof that the purchase is affordable. Your broker should also test higher repayments and a period without rent.

When to pause

Pause before signing if your plan relies on a pay rise, an unconfirmed gift, constant full occupancy or selling another asset for a price you have not tested.

You do not have to use every dollar the bank offers. Leave yourself choices.

3. Who can help you?

You do not have to check everything alone

Different people answer different questions. A helpful salesperson can explain a project, but should not be your only source of information about its value, contract or tax treatment.

Person	What to ask them to do
Mortgage broker or lender	Estimate borrowing, repayments and the cash you may need at settlement.
Property solicitor or conveyancer	Explain the contract, legal deadlines and your rights if something changes.
Registered tax agent or accountant	Explain tax, ownership choices and what records to keep.
Independent building inspector	Check the finished property and report defects.
Local property manager	Give a realistic rental estimate and explain letting costs and tenant demand.
Property adviser or buyer's representative	Help compare suitable options and explain the service they provide.

A useful question for everyone

“How are you paid, and do you receive money or a referral benefit if I buy this property?”

A commission does not automatically mean the advice is poor. It does mean you should understand the relationship. Ask what alternatives have been considered and which checks you still need to arrange independently.

Choose advisers who are suitably qualified for the work you need and experienced in the state where you are buying.

Ask for the important advice in writing. You should be able to explain the main risks in your own words afterwards.

Make the conversations easier

Take the same basic information to each adviser

Tell them your budget, savings, existing loans, income, goal and likely buying timeframe. If you already own a property, include its loan balance, repayments and actual rent and expenses.

Share the full contract and attachments with your legal adviser. A brochure or price list does not show the obligations you will take on.

Questions worth asking early

To your broker: “If the property's bank valuation is lower when it is finished, how much extra money might I need?”

To your solicitor: “What are the five most important risks in this contract? Can any of them be reduced before I sign?”

To your accountant: “Whose name should be on the contract, and how would this purchase affect my tax position?”

To your property manager: “What would you expect it to rent for without a developer's guarantee, and what nearby properties support that estimate?”

Give yourself time to understand

If an explanation is full of unfamiliar words, ask for a simple example. For instance: “Show me what that clause could mean for a \$750,000 purchase.”

There is no benefit in nodding along to something you do not understand. You are the person who will have to fund the purchase and live with the result.

Keep an advice record

Write down the question, answer, date and who gave the advice. Note anything still unresolved. If two advisers appear to disagree, ask them to explain the difference before proceeding.

A useful answer tells you what it means for your decision, not just what the rule is called.

4. Choose an area people want to live in

Think like a tenant

Imagine the person who might rent your property. Where would they work? How would they travel? Could they afford the proposed rent? Would the home suit a single person, couple, family or someone downsizing?

Look at everyday needs: shops, transport, employment, health services and schools where relevant. Visit the area if you can, including at a busy time. A short line on a map may be a slow commute in practice.

Check what exists and what is only proposed

A planned station or shopping centre may sound appealing. Ask whether it is funded, approved and being built. Make your decision using the area as it is, as well as realistic plans for its future.

A growing population does not guarantee that every property will grow in value. The homes being built and the rents local households can afford matter too.

Look for competing homes

Ask a local property manager how many similar properties are available and whether tenants have plenty of choice. Check what else is being built nearby and when those homes may be finished.

If many similar apartments become available together, you may have to compete on rent. A suburb can be popular while a particular type of property is oversupplied.

Check risks that affect living costs

Use council information and relevant government maps to investigate flood, bushfire and other local risks. Get an insurance estimate early. A low purchase price can lose its appeal if insurance or running costs are high.

Describe the likely tenant before choosing the property. “Someone will rent it” is not enough.

Choose the actual home, not just the suburb

Small differences can matter

Two homes in the same building can offer very different experiences. One may have good natural light and privacy. Another may overlook a loading area or sit beside a noisy lift.

Read the floor plan carefully. Check room measurements, not just the labels. Could a normal bed, sofa and dining table fit? Is there useful storage? Can doors open properly around the furniture?

Look beyond the display home

Display homes can include upgrades, furniture or landscaping that are not part of your price. Ask for the written list of inclusions and exclusions. If a feature matters, ask your solicitor to confirm how the contract describes it.

Consider balcony size, privacy, stairs, parking and the position of bins or service equipment. Check whether nearby land could be built on and affect a view.

Who might buy it from you later?

A future buyer may want to live in the property rather than rent it out. Practical layouts, comfortable rooms and sensible running costs may appeal to both groups.

A property designed for a very narrow use can have fewer potential buyers. That can matter if your circumstances change and you need to sell.

Your shortlist

For each property, write down:

- Who is likely to rent it?
- Who might buy it later?
- What makes this particular home useful or appealing?
- What could make it difficult to let or sell?

If you would avoid a home because of noise, poor light or awkward rooms, a tenant may feel the same way.

5. Is the price reasonable?

Look at actual sales

The price on a brochure is what the seller is asking. To judge it, compare recent sales of similar properties in the area.

Try to match the property type, size, location, parking and condition. A new two-bedroom apartment is not directly comparable with the average price of every home in the suburb.

Ask why a new property costs more than an established alternative. Some difference may reflect newer fittings or better design. You still need to decide whether the difference is reasonable.

Make a small comparison sheet

Property	What makes it comparable?	Sale price and date
Your proposed purchase	Size, rooms, parking, location	Asking price
Comparable sale 1	Similarities and differences	Verified sale
Comparable sale 2	Similarities and differences	Verified sale
Comparable sale 3	Similarities and differences	Verified sale

Do not use the developer's examples alone. Ask an independent local agent or valuer what other evidence is available. If there are few useful comparisons, recognise that the price is harder to judge.

What about a discount?

“Reduced from \$800,000 to \$770,000” does not prove the property is worth \$770,000. The original asking price may have been too high.

Similarly, an attractive display suite does not tell you what a lender will value the completed property at.

Before discussing how much the price might rise, make sure you understand the price you are paying today.

Rent, incentives and the numbers behind the offer

Ask what tenants are actually paying

A rental estimate should come with evidence. Ask for similar properties that have recently been leased, how long they took to find tenants and whether any incentives were needed.

Current advertisements are useful, but an advertised rent is not necessarily the rent achieved. Obtain a written estimate from a local property manager who is not relying only on the project's sales material.

A rent guarantee needs its own checks

A developer may offer a rent guarantee for a limited period. That does not prove the property will earn the same rent afterwards.

Ask who makes the payments, what conditions apply, which fees you pay and what happens if the provider cannot pay. Check whether you must use a particular manager or buy a furniture package.

“Free” extras still need a price check

A cashback, furniture package or fee holiday can have value. Compare the whole deal with similar properties sold without the offer.

For example, \$20,000 cashback on a \$780,000 property is not automatically a bargain if similar homes sell for less. Check when the cashback is paid: money received after settlement cannot be assumed to fund settlement.

Tell your lender and advisers about every incentive. Do not deduct the same rebate twice when you work out your cash contribution.

Gross yield in plain English

Gross yield is annual rent divided by the purchase price, multiplied by 100. At \$650 a week on a \$750,000 property, the figure is about 4.5%, assuming rent is paid for all 52 weeks.

It is a starting comparison only. It ignores vacancies, expenses and loan repayments.

6. Check the people building it

The developer and builder have different jobs

The **developer** organises the project. The **builder** carries out the construction. The seller named in your contract may be another company within the same group.

Ask for the exact legal names. A familiar brand does not automatically mean its parent company guarantees your particular purchase.

Look at completed work

Ask which similar projects the team has finished. Where possible, inspect completed buildings and speak with people who have experience of them: owners, property managers or the body corporate manager.

Useful questions include: Was completion close to the expected date? Were the finished homes similar to what was promised? How were defects handled? Did the running costs match the early estimates?

Online reviews can raise questions, but they should not be your only evidence.

Ask how far the project has progressed

Check whether the land is owned, approvals are in place and a builder has been appointed. Ask whether enough properties must be sold before work begins, and whether project finance is arranged or still conditional.

You do not need to assess a company's finances alone. Your solicitor can help identify the parties and relevant searches. Ask what remains uncertain and how it could affect you.

Check the builder's licence

Use the relevant state or territory licensing body to check the exact builder. Ask about experience on projects of a similar size and type, current workload and applicable insurance.

A good sales presentation is useful for explaining a project. Completed work and written records help you judge whether the promises are realistic.

New does not mean problem-free

What if the project is delayed?

Delays can come from approvals, labour shortages, weather, finance or construction problems. Ask for a realistic completion range rather than planning around one optimistic date.

A delay may change your loan options, insurance arrangements or plans for another property. It can also mean waiting longer for rental income.

What if the builder or developer fails?

The result depends on the project, contract, deposit arrangements and applicable protections. You should not assume that another builder will immediately take over or that every loss will be covered.

Before signing, ask your solicitor where your deposit will be held, when it can be released and what rights you have if the project does not proceed.

Apartments and shared expenses

In an apartment building or some townhouse developments, owners share certain expenses. The organisation managing these is often called a **body corporate, owners corporation or strata scheme**.

The fees may help pay for building insurance, lifts, gardens and common areas. A pool or gym is not free simply because it is included in the development.

Ask for the proposed budget and long-term maintenance allowance. A low first-year estimate may not reflect later costs. Also ask about special levies: extra contributions owners may need to make for major work or unexpected expenses.

Keep the practical question in view

Could you still afford the property if the fees were higher than estimated, or if an unexpected bill arrived? Include shared costs in your budget from the beginning.

New fittings may mean fewer early repairs, but they do not remove the need for inspections, insurance or spare cash.

7. Understand the contract before you sign

Your solicitor's job is to explain what you are committing to

An off-the-plan contract can allow changes to the property and its delivery date. Ask your solicitor to explain these in ordinary language, including what would let you end the contract and what would not.

Do not assume you can cancel because a loan falls through. A right to end the purchase because finance is unavailable must come from the contract or an applicable legal right.

Five questions to start with

What exactly am I buying? Check the lot, floor plan, parking, storage and included fittings.

What can change? Ask about room size, layout, brands, facilities and completion timing.

What happens to my deposit? Check who holds it, when it can be released and the circumstances in which it is refunded.

When must I pay the balance? Understand what triggers settlement and how much notice you receive.

What happens if I cannot settle? Ask about interest, loss of the deposit and other possible claims. The consequences may exceed the deposit.

Cooling-off is not a substitute for checking first

A cooling-off period is a limited opportunity to cancel after signing, where the law provides one. The time allowed, exclusions and cost vary. Some purchases have no such protection, and rights can sometimes be waived.

Get advice before signing. Ask your solicitor to give you the exact deadline and cancellation process for your contract in writing.

If you are told “that clause is never used”, still ask what would happen if it were used.

Three contract terms made simple

Sunset date

A sunset date is a deadline linked to an event such as registration of the plan or completion of the building. It is not necessarily the expected handover date.

Ask who can end the contract if the deadline is missed, whether it can be extended and what protections apply. Do not assume the seller and buyer have the same rights. Rules differ between states and types of property.

Variations

A variation is a change. The contract may permit different fittings, adjustments to dimensions or changes to common areas.

Tell your solicitor which features you would not want to lose. Ask what changes must be disclosed and what rights you have to object, seek compensation or cancel. If a change is notified later, send it to your solicitor promptly: response periods may be short.

Assignment or nomination

These terms can involve another buyer taking over, or being named under, a contract. Do not assume you can simply find someone else if you change your mind.

The contract may restrict this, and consent, fees, tax or duty may apply. Selling before completion can also be difficult if the developer is still selling similar properties.

Protect the deposit transfer

Before sending money, verify the account details by calling your solicitor or the relevant holder on a number you already know is genuine. An email containing new bank details is not enough.

Keep a record of the payment and confirmation of receipt. Ask your solicitor before paying a reservation or holding amount if you do not understand whether it is refundable or binding.

A promise that matters to your decision should be checked against the contract, not left as a conversation.

8. Plan for the loan you need later

Pre-approval is only an early step

A pre-approval can help you understand your possible borrowing range. It usually has conditions and an expiry date. It is not a promise to lend the same amount when a building finishes months or years later.

Your lender may reassess income, debts, living costs and the completed property's value. Lending rules and interest rates may also change.

Keep your broker informed if you plan to change jobs, take on another loan or increase credit limits. A change that seems small to you can affect the lender's calculations.

The bank's valuation can be lower than your price

Suppose you buy for \$750,000. For illustration, assume the bank will lend 80% of its valuation and you otherwise meet its requirements.

Bank valuation	Loan at 80%	Your total share of the price
\$750,000	\$600,000	\$150,000
\$712,500: 5% lower	\$570,000	\$180,000
\$675,000: 10% lower	\$540,000	\$210,000

In the last case, you need \$60,000 more of your own money than you first expected. Buying costs and money kept in reserve are additional.

If you already paid a \$75,000 deposit, that counts towards your share. With the \$540,000 loan, the remaining price contribution would be \$135,000, not \$210,000 again.

Ask your broker to run the numbers for your purchase. The lender's final offer may depend on more than a simple percentage of value.

Work out the monthly cost of holding it

Rent is the starting income, not your profit

Allow for periods without a tenant and the cost of managing, insuring and maintaining the property. Include council rates, water charges, strata fees and land tax where applicable.

Then include loan payments. **Interest** is the cost of borrowing. **Principal** is the amount of the loan you repay. Both affect your bank account, but they are treated differently for tax.

A made-up example: before tax

Annual amount	Expected case	Harder year
Rent per week	\$650	\$600
Weeks rent is paid	50	47
Rent received	\$32,500	\$28,200
Interest on \$600,000 loan	\$39,000 at 6.5%	\$48,000 at 8%
Other running costs	\$8,500	\$10,000
Amount you must contribute	\$15,000	\$29,800
Average monthly contribution	\$1,250	About \$2,483

This example excludes principal repayments, buying costs, major capital spending and tax effects. If your loan also repays principal, add those payments. The interest rates and rents are assumptions, not current offers or forecasts.

Ask what happens when an interest-only period ends

An interest-only loan does not reduce the amount borrowed during that period. Repayments can increase when you must start paying principal as well. Have your broker show you both payment levels.

Keep existing property loans in the picture

If one property will secure another loan, ask what happens when you want to sell or refinance either property. Understand the arrangement before accepting it.

The “harder year” column is there to help you decide what you could cope with, not to predict what will happen.

9. Tax without the jargon

A deduction does not pay the bill for you

A tax deduction reduces the income on which your tax is worked out, if you are eligible to claim it. It does not normally return the full expense to you.

As a simple illustration, a \$1,000 deduction that reduces tax by \$300 still leaves \$700 of that cost with you. The actual saving depends on your tax position and the rules applying to the expense.

What does negative gearing mean?

A rental property is negatively geared when its deductible expenses exceed its rental income. The rules determine whether, and how, that tax loss can reduce other taxable income.

That is not the same as money left in your bank account. Principal repayments use cash but are not interest deductions. Some deductions, such as depreciation, may not involve a new cash payment that year.

What is depreciation?

It is a way of claiming eligible costs over time. There are different rules for the building itself and for items such as appliances.

New items may be treated differently from previously used items in a residential rental property. A quantity surveyor can prepare a schedule of eligible construction and asset costs, and your tax agent decides what you can claim.

Building-related deductions can also affect the tax calculation when you sell. Do not judge their value only by the first year's deduction.

Keep two separate calculations

Use a cash budget to see whether you can pay the bills. Ask your accountant to calculate the tax outcome separately.

Tax may improve the result of an investment, but it does not remove the need to afford it.

The 2027 tax changes: what to ask

Dates and the meaning of “new” matter

The 2026 legislation changes how some residential property losses and capital gains are treated from 1 July 2027. The following is a short overview, not an eligibility test.

Rental losses: qualifying new builds can retain negative-gearing treatment. Protections apply to relevant interests acquired before 7.30 pm AEST on 12 May 2026. For affected established properties bought later, losses are restricted to relevant residential-property income and gains, with unused losses carried forward.

Capital gains: for relevant gains accruing from 1 July 2027, the reforms introduce inflation-based treatment and a 30% minimum-tax mechanism, subject to exceptions and transition rules. Eligible new-build investors can choose between the retained 50% discount and the new arrangements.

An “off-the-plan” label does not, by itself, establish eligibility. Ask your tax agent to check the property, buyer, use and contract dates. The 30% mechanism is not simply an extra 30% added to ordinary tax.

Source: Treasury's Budget 2026-27 tax summary and the Treasury Laws Amendment (Tax Reform No. 1) Act 2026. Links are in the sources section.

Take these questions to your accountant

- Does this particular property qualify under the new-build rules?
- Which date counts for my purchase, and does the contract affect it?
- How would rental losses be treated in my circumstances?
- What happens when I sell, including deductions claimed along the way?
- How would the result differ if I bought an established property instead?

Request a written explanation based on your circumstances. Do not use a sales brochure's tax estimate as your budget.

Other tax and ownership questions

Decide whose name goes on the contract

Buying alone, jointly, through a company or through a trust can produce different tax, borrowing and legal outcomes. Superannuation ownership has additional restrictions.

Ask for advice before signing. Changing the buyer later can create new costs and may require consent. A structure chosen by a friend may not suit you.

Transfer duty and land tax

Transfer duty, often called stamp duty, is a state or territory tax associated with a property purchase. **Land tax** is a separate tax that may apply while you own land.

The amounts depend on matters such as location, value, ownership and any relevant concessions or exemptions. First-home-buyer assistance is not automatically available because this is your first investment.

Get estimates for the actual buyer and property. Check when payment is due; do not assume every cost waits until handover.

Building on vacant land

Do not assume that all interest, rates or other holding costs are immediately deductible while a rental home is being built. Vacant-land rules can restrict claims. Give the land and building contracts to your accountant so they can explain what applies.

GST at settlement

Some new-property purchases require part of the purchase payment to go directly to the ATO. Your solicitor or conveyancer should check the seller's notice and arrange the required forms and payment.

This withholding is generally a direction of part of the purchase money, not another full payment on top of the agreed price. Have the actual settlement figures explained to you.

Keep purchase documents, loan records and receipts from the start. Some records may be needed years later when you sell.

10. Which type of property suits you?

Compare the whole ownership experience

“Off the plan” describes when you buy, not one type of home. Apartments, townhouses and house-and-land packages have different costs and risks.

Type	Possible appeal	Questions to check
Apartment	Access to a location where a house may cost more; less private outdoor maintenance.	Shared fees, lifts, building defects, room size and similar apartments competing for tenants.
Townhouse	More house-like space, sometimes with a courtyard.	Stairs, privacy, noise between homes, parking, title and any shared expenses.
House and land	More private space and often no large shared building.	Separate contracts, site costs, progress payments, land delays and everything needed before it can be rented.
Completed new home	You can inspect what you are buying.	Defects, price, why it remains unsold and whether it meets the relevant definition of “new”.

Let your budget and tenant guide the choice

A pool, gym or concierge may suit one market and add unwanted expense in another. Ask whether likely tenants value those facilities enough to support the rent needed to cover the costs.

A larger property is not always the better investment if its price and ongoing costs stretch your budget. Equally, a cheaper property is not automatically better value.

Write down the likely rent, total buying cost, annual expenses and main risks for each option. Compare these before deciding which type you prefer.

Choose the home and ownership costs together. The purchase price is only the beginning.

House and land: check the complete price

One package can mean two contracts

You may buy land from one business and sign a separate building contract with another. Land settlement and building payments can happen at different times.

Ask your broker and solicitor how the contracts work together. What if the land is late but the builder's price expires? When do loan repayments begin? What happens if the builder cannot start?

What does “turn-key” include?

The phrase suggests a home that is ready to use, but you need a written list. Check whether the price includes:

- Site preparation, soil-related work and retaining walls.
- Service connections and required approvals or fees.
- Floor coverings, lighting and window coverings.
- Appliances, heating or cooling, where promised.
- Driveway, fencing, landscaping and letterbox.
- Anything required by the estate's design rules.

An allowance is not necessarily a fixed price. Ask what happens if an included allowance is too low or additional work is required.

How progress payments work

A construction loan may release money at stages as building work progresses. Ask the lender how stages are checked, when interest is charged and what money you must contribute first.

There may be a period when you pay interest and other costs but receive no rent. Include that period in the budget, with room for delays.

A useful request

“Please give me one list showing the land price, building price, all exclusions, estimated extra costs and the amount needed to make the home ready for a tenant.”

Compare the finished, ready-to-rent cost with your alternatives, not just the advertised package price.

11. From signing to getting the keys

After signing

Keep the signed contract, disclosure documents and agreed changes together. Put every deadline in a diary, including deposit dates and any finance or cooling-off dates your solicitor identifies.

Confirm that the deposit reached the correct account. Let your broker and accountant know you have signed and give them the documents they need.

During construction

Read project updates and keep copies. If you receive a change to the plans, price or dates, send it to your solicitor rather than relying only on the sales team's explanation.

Keep your savings plan going. Check whether rents and comparable sale prices are moving. If your job, income or borrowing changes, speak to your broker promptly.

As completion approaches

Several months before expected completion, ask your broker when to refresh your application and documents. The right timing depends on the lender and project.

Arrange an independent property manager if you will rent out the home. Discuss likely rent, letting fees, insurance and what must be ready before a tenant moves in.

Ask your solicitor how much settlement notice you will receive. Arrange valuation access and an independent inspection in time. A short notice period is much easier to manage when the team is prepared.

Before settlement

Confirm final loan approval, signed loan documents and available funds. Have your settlement representative explain the remaining payment, taxes and adjustments. Check when insurance needs to start.

Put the broker, solicitor and property manager in contact, with your permission, so important dates are shared.

Inspect it properly and prepare for tenants

A new home still needs an inspection

Arrange a suitably qualified independent inspector. Ask them to compare the finished property with the contract and inspect its condition and operation.

Typical checks include doors, windows, wet areas, drainage, lights, appliances, finishes and signs of moisture or damage. Parking, storage and outdoor areas should also match what you are buying.

Photograph issues and record their exact location. Send the report to your solicitor and follow their advice on how defects should be raised. A defect list does not automatically give you a right to delay settlement.

If something is different

Act promptly if the layout, area, finishes or facilities have changed. Keep the original documents, the notification and evidence of what was delivered. Your solicitor can explain the options and deadlines.

Do not simply refuse to settle without legal advice. Missing a deadline can create its own problems.

Your first months as a landlord

Work with the property manager to confirm rental readiness, required safety checks, a condition report and a realistic asking rent. Follow the tenancy rules for the property's location.

Keep invoices, loan statements and the settlement statement. Ask your accountant whether a depreciation schedule would be useful.

Compare the first few months of actual income and expenses with your budget. If the rent is lower or a bill is higher, adjust the plan early.

A slightly lower realistic rent can be better than leaving a property empty while waiting for an optimistic figure.

12. Make a decision you can live with

You do not need perfect certainty

Every property has risks. The aim is to understand the important ones and decide whether your budget and plans can cope with them.

Before committing, explain the purchase to someone who has not seen the brochure. Can you say why you chose it, why the price looks reasonable and how you would manage a setback?

A final check

It suits my goal. I know what I want the property to do and how long I expect to hold it.

The evidence makes sense. The proposed price and rent have support beyond the sales material.

The project has been checked. I understand who will deliver it and what remains uncertain.

The contract has been explained. I know the main obligations, change provisions and deadlines.

I can fund it. I have considered a lower valuation, higher costs and a period without rent, while keeping emergency money aside.

If an important answer is missing, pause before signing. After signing, ask your solicitor what options remain rather than assuming you can withdraw.

Review it once a year

Compare actual rent, expenses and loan payments with your original plan. Review insurance, reserves and upcoming maintenance. Ask whether the property still suits your circumstances.

If you already own another investment, review them together. Similar properties in the same area can share the same risks.

Buying more properties is not the only measure of progress. Improving your cash position or reducing debt may be more useful at a particular stage of life.

Your next purchase should fit your life, including the years after the excitement of buying has passed.

Your before-you-buy checklist

Tick it only when you have an answer

Use this page as a summary. Keep the supporting documents and professional advice with it.

My money and plans

- ☐ I can explain why I want this property and how long I expect to keep it.
- ☐ My broker has assessed my borrowing and likely repayments.
- ☐ I have allowed for buying costs as well as the deposit.
- ☐ I know what a lower bank valuation could mean for my cash contribution.
- ☐ I can cope with a period without rent and higher running costs.
- ☐ I will still have emergency savings after settlement.

The property and project

- ☐ Recent comparable sales support the price.
- ☐ A local property manager has provided rental evidence.
- ☐ I have checked competing supply and local risks, including insurance.
- ☐ I know the exact developer, seller and builder, and have checked their work.
- ☐ The floor plan, inclusions, parking and storage are clear.
- ☐ Shared costs, future stages and any service-provider restrictions are understood.

The commitment

- ☐ My independent legal adviser has reviewed the full documents.
- ☐ I understand deposit arrangements, cancellation rights and deadlines.
- ☐ I understand permitted changes, delays and settlement obligations.
- ☐ My accountant has explained ownership and relevant tax issues.
- ☐ All incentives have been disclosed to my lender and advisers.
- ☐ Important promises are recorded and checked against the contract.

Anything still unanswered: _____

My next action: _____

Questions for the sales team

Ask for written answers and supporting documents

These questions help you understand an offer. They do not replace independent advice or change the contract by themselves.

The people and progress

1. Who is the legal seller, who owns the land and who is building the property?
2. What comparable projects have this team completed?
3. Which approvals and finance conditions are still outstanding?
4. What is the expected completion range, and what could delay it?

The home itself

5. What are the internal and outdoor areas, and can they change?
6. Exactly what is included in the price? What must I pay for separately?
7. Which parking space and storage area belong to this property?
8. What future stages or nearby buildings could affect privacy, access or views?

Price and rent

9. Which recent completed sales support this price?
10. Which recent leases support the rental estimate?
11. How many similar properties remain for sale or will finish at the same time?
12. What conditions, fees and payment dates apply to each incentive or guarantee?

Shared costs and settlement

13. Can I see the proposed body corporate budget and any long-term service agreements?
14. How can my valuer and inspector access the completed property?
15. What is the process for reporting and fixing defects?

Forward answers that influence your decision to your solicitor. Ask whether they are reflected in enforceable contract terms.

A plain-English brief for your solicitor

Take this page with the full contract

Please explain the following for this particular property and state or territory. I would like to understand the practical consequences, not just the clause numbers.

- Who am I buying from, and what exactly must they deliver?
- Are the plans, dimensions, parking, storage and inclusions clear enough?
- How much deposit do I pay, who holds it, when can it be released and when is it refundable?
- Do I have a cooling-off period or finance condition? What are the exact deadlines and costs of using them?
- What conditions must the project meet before it proceeds?
- What is the sunset date? Who can extend it or end the contract?
- What changes can be made to my property or the common areas? What can I do if a change is unacceptable?
- What restrictions, easements or future development rights affect the property?
- What ongoing shared fees or service contracts will I take on?
- What triggers settlement, how much notice will I get and what happens if I cannot settle?
- What inspection, defect and warranty rights apply?
- Can I sell or transfer the contract before completion, and what could it cost?
- What duty, GST withholding or other settlement issues need attention?
- Which clauses would you recommend changing before I sign?

The features I particularly rely on are:

Please identify the five biggest remaining risks and any action I need to take.

Ask your broker and tax agent to address finance and tax questions that fall outside the legal adviser's work.

Worksheet: cash needed to buy

Work through it with your broker and solicitor

Use actual quotes and estimates for your property. Do not treat the deposit as an extra charge on top of the price.

Item	Your amount
Contract purchase price	\$ _____
Transfer duty	\$ _____
Legal fees and searches	\$ _____
Loan, valuation and inspection costs	\$ _____
Furniture, landscaping or other required extras	\$ _____
Other agreed costs and settlement adjustments	\$ _____
A. Total price and buying costs	\$ _____
Less deposit and buying costs already paid	\$ _____
Less final loan funds available for these amounts	\$ _____
B. Remaining cash needed to complete	\$ _____
Plus savings to keep after completion	\$ _____
C. Cash needed from now, including retained savings	\$ _____

Calculate B as A minus amounts already paid minus available loan funds. Add the savings you want to keep to get C.

A reserve remains your money. It is not a purchase expense. Do not count it as available cash for the purchase and as retained savings at the same time.

If an incentive applies, ask your advisers where to enter it and when the money will arrive. Count it once only. Refresh this worksheet if the final loan or settlement figures change.

Checked with: _____ **Date:** _____

Worksheet: can I carry the costs?

Compare an expected year with a harder one

Use annual amounts throughout. A harder year might include lower rent, more vacancy, higher interest and an unexpected bill. Choose assumptions with your advisers.

Item	Expected year	Harder year
Weekly rent	\$ _____	\$ _____
Weeks rent is received	_____	_____
A. Annual rent received	\$ _____	\$ _____
Property management and letting	\$ _____	\$ _____
Rates, water and applicable land tax	\$ _____	\$ _____
Body corporate or strata fees	\$ _____	\$ _____
Insurance	\$ _____	\$ _____
Repairs and maintenance	\$ _____	\$ _____
Loan interest and other cash costs	\$ _____	\$ _____
Loan principal repayments	\$ _____	\$ _____
Major improvements paid from cash	\$ _____	\$ _____
B. Total cash paid out	\$ _____	\$ _____
A minus B: surplus or shortfall	\$ _____	\$ _____
Divide by 12: monthly amount	\$ _____	\$ _____

Annual rent is weekly rent multiplied by the weeks you expect payment. Include each expense once. Enter full principal-and-interest repayments only if you have not already included interest and principal separately.

This is a before-tax cash worksheet. Keep non-cash depreciation out of it. Ask your accountant to calculate tax separately.

Could I meet the harder year's costs without using household emergency money?

Worksheet: if the bank lends less

Keep the valuation gap separate from your emergency fund

Use the same purchase costs as the previous buying worksheet. Ask your broker to estimate the actual loan available in each case; do not assume a particular lending percentage will be approved.

Item	Expected value	Value 5% lower	Value 10% lower
Bank valuation	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Loan available	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Remaining cash to complete*	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Cash available for purchase**	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Extra cash needed, if any	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

*Purchase price plus buying costs, less the deposit and costs already paid, less final loan funds.

**Exclude the savings you intend to keep for emergencies. Do not include an unapproved loan or uncertain future income.

If the cash required exceeds the cash available, the difference is the extra amount you must find. Work out how you would cover it before signing.

My decision notes

This property suits my plans because:

The strongest evidence supporting it is:

The main risk, and how I would manage it:

An unanswered question that would stop me signing:

Useful words in everyday language

Term	What it means here
Capital growth	An increase in the property's value. It is not guaranteed.
Cash flow	The money coming in and going out. A shortfall is an amount you must fund.
Comparable sale	A sale of a similar property used to help judge price.
Deposit	An initial payment towards the purchase price.
Disclosure documents	Information the seller provides about the property and proposed arrangements.
Due diligence	The checks you make before committing.
Equity	The property's value less the loan balance. It is not automatically cash you can withdraw.
Gross yield	Annual rent divided by the price, expressed as a percentage, before costs.
Loan-to-value ratio	The loan as a percentage of the lender's accepted property value.
Principal	The amount of the loan you owe, excluding interest charges.
Settlement	The legal completion of the purchase and transfer of ownership.
Strata or body corporate	The arrangements through which owners manage shared property and expenses.
Sunset date	A contract deadline linked to a specified event; check what rights it creates.
Title	The official ownership record for land or a particular property.
Variation	A change to agreed plans, work or specifications.

If an unfamiliar term affects your money or rights, ask your adviser to explain what it means for your purchase.

Sources and further help

Official information for the important checks

The original guide supplied the topics for this edition. The following official sources were checked on 6 October 2026 for the principal financial, tax and legal explanations. They are starting points, not confirmation that a particular purchase is suitable.

Moneysmart: buying an investment property. General costs and risks. [Read the guide.](#)

Treasury: Budget 2026-27 tax system changes. Overview of the 2027 negative-gearing and capital-gains changes. [Read the summary.](#)

Federal Register of Legislation. Treasury Laws Amendment (Tax Reform No. 1) Act 2026, No. 49. [View the Act.](#)

Australian Taxation Office: rental property information. Start at ato.gov.au/rental. The ATO's rental-properties guidance explains deductions, depreciation, records and restrictions on vacant-land costs. Ask your tax agent to apply the current rules.

ATO: GST at settlement, purchaser guide. The process for withholding and paying an amount to the ATO where required. [Read the purchaser guide.](#)

NSW Government: buying property off the plan. Contract checks, changes, deposits and other protections. [Read the guidance.](#)

Consumer Affairs Victoria: buying off the plan. [Read the guidance.](#)

Queensland Government: cooling-off period. [Read the guidance.](#)

The links in this PDF are clickable. Some government pages may redirect or require you to search their current website.

Where to check state and territory rules

Ask about the place you are buying

A rule that applied to your last property may not apply to the next one. Ask your solicitor about cooling-off, deposits, sunset dates, changes, defects and settlement deadlines for the actual contract.

Use the relevant revenue office for duty and land-tax information. Ask for a calculation based on the proposed owner, not a generic example.

Location	Official starting points
New South Wales	NSW Government and Revenue NSW
Victoria	Consumer Affairs Victoria and State Revenue Office
Queensland	Queensland Government and Queensland Revenue Office
South Australia	SA.GOV.AU housing and RevenueSA
Western Australia	Consumer Protection and RevenueWA
ACT	ACT Legislation and ACT Revenue Office
Northern Territory	NT property guidance and Territory Revenue Office
Tasmania	Consumer, Building and Occupational Services and State Revenue Office

These are official directories carried forward from the source guide, rather than a state-by-state legal opinion. Always check the current page and obtain advice on your circumstances.

If you are a foreign buyer, a company or trust, or buying through superannuation, tell your advisers at the outset. Different approvals, taxes or restrictions may apply.

About Lorraine and Life Without Boundaries



Lorraine Hollitt

Director | Property Investment Specialist

LWB Property Group

Life Without Boundaries starts with a straightforward idea: understand what you want to achieve before choosing a property.

This guide is designed to help you arrive at that conversation with a clearer picture of your goals, budget and questions. You do not need to have everything worked out before you begin.

Your next step

To discuss your property goals with Lorraine, visit the Life Without Boundaries website and enquire about a complimentary discovery conversation.

Bring a few notes about what you want from an investment, the funds you may have available and your preferred timeframe. If you have already found a property, bring its details and the questions you still need answered.

Ask which services suit your needs and how fees or commissions are paid. Your own solicitor, tax agent and finance adviser should check the parts of a purchase that need their expertise.

www.lifewithoutboundaries.com.au

Strategy first. Property second.

STRATEGY FIRST. PROPERTY SECOND.

A property purchase is easier to approach when you understand the next step. This guide explains off-the-plan buying in everyday language, with examples, useful questions and room to work through your own numbers.

Know what you are buying.

Allow for costs and delays.

Bring the right people into the decision.



Start with your goals.