

Say hello to a good buy

There are ways and means to secure your dream home, says **Penny Lewis**.



WHETHER IT'S your first, or your 10th, buying a home is and should be an emotional decision. "After all, you have to wake up there each morning. It needs to feel right," says **Lisa Phillips**, director of buyers' agency Erskine + Owen. When you've found "the one", you need to think about how you are going to secure it. If it's a quality property, it's bound to be highly sought after by others as well.

Here are Lisa's top tips for finding and securing a great property:

- Once you've found a house you want, research the sale price of similar properties sold recently in the area. An offer consistent with recent sales, in line with current market value, is likely to be seen as realistic and appealing to the seller. It is also more likely to be accepted by your finance lender. Ask the sales agent to send you the Real Estate Institute's sales statistics report for your area.

- After you have done your research on the value of the house, ensure your offer is within what you can afford. Account for possible future increases in mortgage rates. Avoid the trap of increasing your price just because the property is hotly contested. Your dream home could become a living hell if you can't afford to service the mortgage.

- Despite what we may think, the highest offer is not always the key to winning a house. It's important



Purchasing a new home? Your research should include telling sales agents in your area what you are looking for.

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"Your dream home could become a living hell if you can't afford to service the mortgage."

to consider the seller's motivations. If they've already bought another house, then a clean offer — an offer with no or very few conditions — could make yours stand out. Be sure to gather as much information about the seller from the listing agent — without tipping your hand.

- Use a commercially savvy solicitor — one who knows how to apply the law in a common-sense way. We see too many instances where solicitors think they are doing right by their client, but may in fact be putting the deal at risk. Remember: you take advice from your solicitor, but then it's up to you to instruct them. Independent legal advice is a must — but make sure it is sound advice.

- When you are ready to make an offer, put your best foot forward. There is more to negotiating and winning a property than bargaining price. There are a number of terms to be agreed. Negotiating successfully comes with knowledge and experience. Remember, the sales agent works primarily for the vendor. This is where a buyers' agent can help.

- As well as searching the internet and newspapers, talk to listing sales agents in your area. Tell them what you are looking for and sign up to their databases. As a buyers' agent, helping clients purchase property every day, we can confidently say there is a good percentage of properties for sale that never make it to formal advertising.

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