

Readers' Choice Awards 2012

Every year, *Your Investment Property* runs a poll where readers are asked to vote for their most trusted investment advisors in a variety of categories. This year our readers have spoken and the winners are...

Who do you trust? For most Australians, purchasing property will be the largest investment they will ever make and having the right people to help them along the way is vital.

Enter *Your Investment Property's* Readers' Choice Awards. For the fifth year running, we've asked our readers – everyday investors trying to achieve wealth through property – which property investment advisors have boosted them to property success. What their votes have shown is a remarkable insight into which service providers are giving their customers the best bang for their buck.

This year's awards received the largest number of votes to date, as Aussies from around the country scrambled to tell us the people they believe provide exceptional service in six different categories of advice – buyer's agent, property manager, real estate agent, tax specialist, property investment advisor and mortgage broker.

Knowing that larger service providers will inevitably have more customers and that this may skewer the results, each Readers' Choice winner was decided by the strength of the comments voters said about them. The better things readers had to say about their services providers, the more likely their vote would count.

The Readers' Choice winners weren't the only ones who got lucky. Six voters won fantastic prize packs worth more than \$6,000. We're pleased to congratulate Robyn Morgan, Stephen Meade, Rachel Dixon, Denise Moser, Richard Tipler and Steve Si for all winning:

- ✦ 15-month Michael Yardney mentorship program valued at \$2,595
- ✦ 12-month Essential Real Estate Investar membership valued at \$1,788
- ✦ My Knowledge access from Real Estate Investar valued at \$850
- ✦ 12-month membership to www.MyProp.com.au valued at \$259
- ✦ A selection of myrpdata reports of your choice from RP Data valued at up to \$200
- ✦ 12-month platinum membership to NMD Data valued at \$199
- ✦ 12-month membership to HomeSource Access valued at \$110
- ✦ 12-month subscription pack including *Your Investment Property*, and *Your Mortgage* magazines valued at \$180

INVESTMENT ADVISOR OF THE YEAR

Lindy Lear

Rocket Property Group



What is your property advisory experience?

I have been working as a property advisor for more than five years. I started with Ian Hosking Richards when he launched Rocket Property Group in 2007. I am a certified property investment advisor with Property Investors Association of Australia (PIAA) and am training with Property Investment Professionals of Australia (PIPA). I have real estate registration in Queensland and NSW, hold a Certificate IV in Mortgage Broking and have certified financial training in general investment advice.

How does it feel to win the award?

I feel honoured to be voted by the investors and readers of the magazine for this award for the second time. I want to thank each and every person who voted for me. My reward is that I have helped you in some small way towards your property success.

What makes a good investment advisor?

An advisor must have passion for property and must have "walked the walk" so they can "talk the talk". They need to care about the people they help and be willing to share their property experiences (good and bad); be good listeners as well as good teachers; and be able to inspire people to believe they can achieve their goals through property investing. They also need to have acquired their knowledge based on real-life investing experience, and recognise when they need to recommend other experts to help investors, such as brokers, accountants, property managers and legal people.

What's the best investment advice to follow?

The best advice I got was "you cannot become a successful investor until you take action and buy something." So I did. I learnt a whole lot from that first investment experience which made it easier when buying my second and third. Property investing is not a theoretical sport. It is an action where you learn by doing. Don't try and reinvent the wheel and expect to know everything before you start. The best way to learn is to leverage from someone else's experience. Find someone you trust who is already successful in property and get some guidance from them to help you get started.

How many investment properties do you own?

Eight. My strategy is to buy brand-new properties in locations where there are strong drivers for growth, low vacancy rates and good rental yields. I use a property manager, use leverage and borrow 80-90%. I rarely have a vacancy period, receive above 5-6% yield across all



properties and with the benefits of high tax deductibility on new properties means I pay very little tax.

What do you enjoy about being an investment advisor?

My most enjoyable moments are when the penny drops that investing in property is possible for them. Helping investors become successful just gives me a great buzz.

RUNNER-UP
Michael Yardney
Metropole
Property Strategists



BUYER'S AGENT OF THE YEAR

Jake Milne

Infolio Property Advisors



What is your buyer's agent experience?

I'm a certified Agent's Rep in NSW and Victoria, and have seven years of sales and negotiation experience from the corporate sector, which has been an excellent transferrable skill.

How does it feel to win the award?

It's quite flattering and surprising. The other winners in previous Readers' Choice Awards have been industry heavyweights, some of who I've had the pleasure of meeting, and all of which I admire. I'm privileged to be mentioned among them. It's also reassuring to see that clients and the people who I've networked with appreciate the hard work. I owe them a lot of thanks.

What makes a good buyer's agent?

A good buyer's advocate constantly seeks knowledge,



diving into every good source of information possible. They also develop and maintain strong relationships. There are many talented specialists that play essential parts in the buying process and having a large network of professionals you can trust is a major part of being a buyer's agent. I'd also like to think good buyer's agents are passionately in love with property. Nothing is too much work, or takes too much time because the love of the job overcomes those obstacles.

What's the best purchasing advice to follow?

Property is likely to be your largest investment – it's important to establish the right financial platform before investing. When it's time to buy, ensure that you're investing, not speculating. Focus on established areas with proven historic growth patterns and existing infrastructure, instead of buying in areas that have proposed changes or developments.

Where do most buyers get it wrong?

Buyers often choose properties that restrict them from reaching their property investment goals. They select sub-standard assets or focus on yield properties when they are at a stage when they would benefit more from a growth strategy. I always recommend searching for properties that are in residential zones, within established suburbs. Make sure that the street is desirable, quiet and perhaps even leafy. The property itself should be something a home owner would want to buy in the future for a potential emotional outcome. Features such as parking, outdoor space, and a good size are musts.

What do you enjoy about being a buyer's agent?

If I had to pick one it would be that you can talk to almost everybody about property and they can relate. Also, it's very rewarding consulting with people and helping them learn how to invest with better results.

What readers said:

"Jake and the team at Infolio not only found the perfect site for us but secured it for much less than expected. I was sceptical about buyer's agents before these dealings and now must say they've really turned me around." – **Stephen Meade**

RUNNER-UP

Nathan Birch

B Invested



MORTGAGE BROKER OF THE YEAR

Paul Jones

Raise Finance



What is your experience as a mortgage broker?

I started in 2004 after a three-year stint as a financial planner. I moved into broking because my passion and heart was in property. I had been an active property investor since

1999 and I found it hard as a financial planner in those days not to be able to advise on property. I also had an ethical dilemma advising people to purchase shares and managed funds after the rise of terrorism sent shares plunging in 2001-03, when my own money was in property and doing very well.

How does it feel to be recognised for your service?

Quite a shock. I had no idea about the survey and was a little sceptical when I got the call. Nevertheless I have seen the comments written about me by some of my clients and I am happy that I can be that stable rock they are looking for when it comes to grassroots, sensible advice. It just shows. At the end of the day, without happy customers you are not going to get the referrals and repeat business.

Many might feel daunted at the thought of taking on so much debt. How can they combat that fear?

After years in the business you get a firm understanding of your clients and there are some that can handle debt with ease and others who are sporadic and don't handle it well. In most cases if you present enough information the facts become clear and they make their own decision.

What advantages do buyers get using a broker?

Transparency for one. I am upfront with all customers and always have been. In my first meeting I tell them what we do, how we get paid and what I will do for them. I inform them I have no allegiance with any of the lenders and the customer is free to choose which ever lender they want to and it is no skin off my nose.

How can you spot a bad broker?

As a customer I would ask any advisor in the property game how many properties they have or have owned and over what time frame. That will give you a clear idea of their experience. There is nothing better than advice from experience.

What readers said:

"Paul Jones from Raise Finance stands out above the rest. I went to a number of brokers in Darwin who had told me bluntly I couldn't borrow the amount I wanted. Paul researched multiple options, and unlike the previous brokers, found a way for me to borrow. On top of this, he helped me evaluate a number of different investment property options, calculating out-of-pocket expenses and affordability. He is one of the only businesses I refer to friends and workmates."

- Rachel Dixon

RUNNER-UP

Drew Ivory

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TAX ADVISOR OF THE YEAR

Shukri Barbara

Property Tax Specialists



What is your tax advisory experience?

I've spent more than 30 years in tax and accounting and received a 30-year membership pin from CPA Australia in June 2012. I'm also a tax agent and a 30-year member of the Taxation Institute. I've specialised in advising people with investments in property since 2001.

What are some of the most common tax issues investors seek you for advice?

Apart from finding out what's deductible, the tax issues investors seek help with depend on what stage of life and what stage of the investment journey they are on.

Young investors are usually looking to understand tax



rules and set themselves up correctly with appropriate ownership structures to maximise their benefits and minimise their tax.

Investors who are older are looking to minimise their tax liability as they plan to exit investments (minimising capital gains) or ensure they are producing positive income for retirement. Investors between the two are looking for support and advice to help them make the right decisions, test their assumptions or just talk an idea for improvement through.

What are the advantages of having a tax specialist?

Property tax specialists can help investors avoid costly mistakes. Having someone who is not emotionally involved checking your ideas and plans can enable better decision making.

If there was one tax tip every investor should remember, what would it be?

No one tax tip fits all people. However, it's always good to develop a strategy. Property investment decisions should be commercially sound with tax benefits as a part of the total – not the whole justification.

How does it feel to win the award again?

Twice as humbling as the first time. I'm grateful to all those who nominated me.

What readers said:

"Without Shukri's advice we would have made purchases at the wrong moment for obtaining funding, made sales with negative tax outcomes and made a total mess of rental management, depreciation and adherence to ever-changing regulations. Any accountant can claim to know tax matters in property investment, but we get so much more out of Shukri. We are constantly kept up to date on tax, banking and mortgage trends, investment models, legal structures and other diverse matters. I might add that Shukri always has time to have chat, take an interest in our family, brainstorm business ideas and humbly shares his own challenges and ambitions." – Denise Moser

RUNNER-UP

David Shaw

WSC



PROPERTY MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Roseanne Gaut

Dowling Real Estate



What is your property management experience?

After completing a traineeship for a Certificate IV in Business, Real Estate Property Management in late 2000, I applied for a position with Dowling Real Estate Maitland and was appointed Property Manager. Dowling Real Estate Maitland had 167 managements when I first began as Property Manager, we now manage over 400 properties. In early 2012, the previous owners approached me with an offer to purchase the business from them and I jumped at the opportunity to benefit from my years of dedication to the industry.

You manage properties in Maitland, NSW. Are there many investors in this market?

Investors in the Maitland area have increased considerably over the last five to 10 years. Factors contributing to the growth include close proximity to coal mines in the Hunter Valley and the Traffic Infringement Bureau and Mineral Resources Department relocating to Maitland. The ABS Census 2011 states 23.8% of housing properties in the Maitland area as rented.

What benefits do investors get with a property manager?

When hiring a property manager, you are hiring professional experience and knowledge in the industry. Property managers know legal requirements, obligations and legislative changes. Agents also have access to tools that assist in choosing the right tenant, teamed with procedures to assist in managing the tenancy. All management fees and charges are tax deductible.

When choosing a property manager, how do you know you're getting a good one?

A property manager needs to be passionate, professional, a great communicator, ambitious and have a balance of empathy and compassion. When you meet the property manager, trust your gut feeling about them and if it feels right go with them. The best way to judge a good property manager is by referrals. It is the ultimate compliment when a previous tenant brings their new investment to the agency for management.

In your experience, what are the biggest property management issues that usually come up?

Rent arrears. If they are not addressed regularly the arrears can get out of control. People need to know boundaries and following a strict arrears policy assists in managing the problem.



How does it feel to win this award?

It is humbling to realise that people have taken the time to say such kind and thoughtful things about me in a public forum. It is wonderful to be thought of in such high regard when at the end of the day I am just doing my job the best I can.

RUNNER-UP

Debra Bingham

Glenway
Rockingham



REAL ESTATE AGENT OF THE YEAR

Scott Farquhar

McGrath Estate Agents-Lindfield



What is your experience as a real estate agent?

I've worked in the real estate industry since 1994 and have been with my present company, McGrath Estate Agents, since 2002.

How does it feel to win this award?

It feels great as I love what I do and I love helping people

with their property needs.

What do you think makes a good real estate agent?

That's easy – honesty, professionalism, six-star service and lots of hard work. I strongly believe you should treat people the way you would want to be treated yourself.

Whenever buyers/sellers become frustrated with their real estate agent, what do you think the cause usually is?

I'd say it would be lack of communication.

What's the best bit of property investment advice you'd give?

Obviously it's the old cliché of location, location, location – the closer you are to transport, the CBD, shops, cafes, good schools parks, beaches and the like, the more likely it is you will have a sound investment.

What readers said:

"Communication, responsiveness, listening, sage advice – these are all attributes I look for and value in any partner I work with. All of the guys I nominated [in this award] tick those criteria, but the one that was the most help to me was Scott Farquhar from McGrath-Lindfield. His professionalism impressed me no end, and that stood out amongst the hundreds of other real estate agents I had dealt with." – **Steve Si**

RUNNER-UP

Robin Welsh

Welsh Real Estate



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