

7 Things to AVOID when buying a House

1. Don't sign a contract solely in the seller's favour

If you want certain inclusions in the contract then you need to ask for them. You have rights too you know. The seller's agent will be trying to contract conditions that suit their client, not you. They will be trying to secure all of their clients' terms on the contract. You will need to make it clear what you want to be included in the contract, for example the length of the settlement time that suits you. If your vendors want a 60 day contract but you need to settle in 30 days then ask for it. If you like their outdoor setting, see if you can have that included in the contract – everything is negotiable! Make sure your contract is subject to having 'your own' Building and Pest inspection done, don't rely on the seller's one. Your own inspection will give you peace of mind because you will know that areas that you can't easily inspect your self, such as the roof space and sub-floor areas will be verified as pest free and structurally sound.

2. Bad neighbours – they weren't home when you visited with the agent

Many people fall in love with the look of a property and the features that it offers and forget that the property is part of a community. And an agent is not going to point out anything that will give you a negative feeling about the property he is trying to sell you. You will have neighbours you know nothing about. Your neighbours may be extremely noisy, or night owls who leave lights on all night that shine into your bedroom, or they may have pets that intrude on your property. The nice little old lady next door may in fact enjoy feeding native birds, which then foul up your back deck or swimming pool. Or you may be moving next door to a home based business where buzz saw is going at all hours of the day and night. It's important that you do your research before you sign the contract. No matter how lovely the house, if the environment it's in proves problematic to you, your enjoyment of your new property will be seriously undermined. Visit the property 'out of business hours' and at weekends, and find out what you can about the neighbours before you sign the dotted line. Use your network of contacts to find out information about the street for you. The research you do before you sign up could make a HUGE difference to both your finances and your emotional well being.

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3. Check for recent repairs

You're impressed by how well the property is presented, but sometimes recent repairs could be a warning sign for you. Repairs could indicate roof leaks; termite damage; structural problems. Look for newly replaced flooring in parts of the house and not in others. Why has that part needed to be replaced? A recent paint job in parts of the ceiling but not the whole house could indicate a roof leak. Inspect the property a number of times so that you see past the gloss and the attractive features, and you take a cold, hard, analytical view of the property. If you have friends that are builders or home renovators, ask them to accompany you and for them to look for things that might indicate a problem. They won't be so emotionally taken with the property as you are and will be able to see things that you might miss.

4. Bad location – why didn't you notice

The seller's agent will take you to see the property at optimum times. He will know what times to avoid and will not take you when the trucks are likely to be hurtling past, or the aeroplane flight path is at its busiest, or when the back rooms are so dark you can't see in them during the day. There may be community features that will impact on your enjoyment of your new property. For example if you are near a school or an educational institution or a sporting venue, parking in your street or even convenient access in and out of your driveway may become extremely problematic. And can you safely say what is planned for the area won't impact on your new property? Are the next door neighbours going to build a huge house that will tower over your back area and steal your privacy? Has a developer bought neighbouring properties and plans on putting up a block of units which will cast a shadow over your house all day and impact on your view? If you like the property make sure you visit it on different days and at different times night and day to get a feel for how it's going to be actually living in that location. Engage a solicitor to do appropriate searches on potential developments in the area. It will be too late after you move in!!

5. You move in and there are no remote controls for the air conditioner or garage

It's not uncommon for buyers on moving in day to discover that they can't open the garage doors because the vendor has accidently packed the remote control and left the state. Make a list of all of the features of your property that are operated by remote control – the garage doors, the internal air conditioning, the alarm system – and make sure that you put a clause in the contract to say that all remotes must be left behind in the property at settlement. It can be really expensive and a massive inconvenience to replace these missing remotes!

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6. There's a big gap in the kitchen where the dishwasher was

Different people have different views about fixtures. In some people's minds the dishwasher is a fixture, but for others, they don't consider it a fixture. They put it in the same category as the fridge or washing machine and take it with them when they leave the property. If you want the dishwasher to stay, make sure it's noted on the contract. Check through the property for other 'fixtures' that you expect to be there when you move in and make sure these are clarified with the vendor. There may be garden fixtures that need to be listed. You wouldn't want to move in and see that the garden you were expecting to be there has been stripped bare when the sellers left.

7. You settle before council and final approvals are completed

If the property has had any improvements done, for example, a deck has been added or the house has been raised, or the underneath of the house has been enclosed for habitation, tell the agent that you want to sight the council approval for these changes or additions. If the property improvements are not completed properly, this could impact on your insurance, your resale value and the 'rent-ability' of your property (if you are buying an investment property). Always delay settlement until any problems are rectified by the current owners and the council gives final approval on any property improvements. Don't just take their word for it!

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