



Louise: So some of the questions that you might ask agents are: how long has the property been on the market? Have you had any offers? And they might not tell you anything much, but they will tell you something. And the more you talk to them, the better it is. Do you think this area is good for investors or if buying a home, why is this area good to live in, and do you like living here? If that's their area, they'll tell you all about it, and what a great question to get the communication happening.

Louise: But the other thing is, be aware. Don't hold them up at an open house. If they're really busy and there are lots of people and they can't spend the time with you, ring them later when it's convenient. Just think about it at all times.

Louise: What developments have you seen going on in an area, is a good question to ask. What changes have you seen? Particularly if they're older, they'd love to tell you everything that's happened in the area and why it's still great to buy in.

Louise: You would also like to know how old is the property, for depreciation and for maintenance issues. Does the building have any structural or other renovations, and particularly not covered by town planning? Now, they might be able to answer that or they might not, and they might have to refer you to Council but that's one question that's worth having a look around and chatting when you're thinking about that.

Louise: Was any work carried out by an owner builder? Generally, you can tell but sometimes people are very clever and hide things. I always say look under rugs. If there's a rug there, there's a reason and they'll probably be hiding something.

Louise: Has anyone else had a building and pest inspection carried out and you might be able to buy it off them but generally always pay for your own. How far is public transport, shops, schools, parks, and obviously, check on Google Earth as well but drive around if you can, or else if you're buying from sight unseen, get someone to go and have a look for you.

Louise: And I found property managers, if I'm buying an investment, are hugely helpful in this area. They will often go and do it for you and have a look at the property because they want it in their pool and they'll check things out for you. Ben, Have you been called on to do that ever?

Ben: Yes, I always used to do rental appraisals and things like that and work with investors as their agent. In terms of if you're buying a property which you're going to rent out as well or maybe there's a tenant in there, definitely always get a record of the maintenance and the property from the property manager and also a ledger (list of rental payments) of the tenant too.

Louise: Yes, great idea. So I've had someone say to a client of mine, look the tenants are not great, but we'll get them out once you've settled. Oh, no, no, no, no, no, we weren't. We get them out before settlement or else you do not inherit a bad tenant. That's a very bad idea.

Ben: That's a big risk.

Louise: Big, big risk because you can be stuck with them

Ben: If they're in and you can't get rid of them, it can be really, really difficult. So if it's on a periodic tenancy, I'd be asking for "**vacant possession**" in negotiations.

Louise: Totally right. Thank you. Definitely. And just extend the settlement term until you get what you want on that. So, can I get a copy of the Section 32? And when you're looking at Section 32s and having a look at contracts, it's great in Victoria we have this great document which is the biggest and best part of buying inventory except for having the agent price guide which is also a huge bonus that you don't get interstate which irritates you when you go looking interstate. They'll go, couldn't decide, says the agent, couldn't bloody decide what the price should be. But in this section 32, watch out for people who've got rates notices that are really old. They have to put a current rates notice and a current lease agreement and current body corporate or owners corporation details and have they paid and you want to know if they were recent. So have they paid recently, and are these recent documents, or was this property on for sale six months ago, and that's why they're using documents that are well over six months ago, and they've brought it back on again. You can sometimes just tell that from looking at the Section 32. So it's well worth having a good read of the contract and seeing that.

Ben: Definitely, with the Section 32 and particularly with the owners corporation make sure the owners corporation meeting minutes are in there and that they are recent because if it's more than a year old, you'll find that there could have been an owners corporation meeting a couple of months ago where there could have been some issues raised. So particularly for the first home buyers out there listening, if you're looking at an apartment building that's really important.

Louise: And we would strongly recommend you don't buy apartments as such. Unless there is something unique about them.

Ben: Some of the deco blocks are okay but not those big modern towers.

Louise: No, exactly right. Yes, deco blocks are definitely in but modern towers are definitely out. And like a client who bought a place in McKinnon in a block and she hasn't been able to live in this place for 10 years because of the mould and leaking and the body corporate refused to fix it. It's hundreds of thousands of dollars that have been wasted on this property.

Louise: Is it the responsibility of the conveyancer to get all current correct information on the Section 32? The issue is, it is the conveyancer's job, but if the owner doesn't provide them with the right information, they might just put in previous or old documents so it's your job when looking at it to make sure they are recent and if there's no recent, check why there's not more recent things in there. It's just a good tip to go and have a good nosy round.

Louise: Also look for any nearby development application. And yes, as we've said is the property currently tenanted? How much for and can I see any rental statements to ensure the tenant pays on time because that can be a real problem.

Louise: And finally, is this area subject to flood, bushfire, growth areas, infrastructure contribution issues, and heritage overlay or landscaping? And some clients of mine sold the back half of their property in Ferntree Gully which was great. They sold the back block. But the people who bought it never checked whether they were allowed to build so they weren't allowed then to build on that site. So my clients sold their back half and then no one could build there. Happy days.

Louise: Should some of these questions be researched prior to approaching the agent? Yes, of course, if you feel like it, and you should be doing a good lot of research before you get into it, before you bother going to see the place but these are good things to open a conversation with an agent so you get them on your team, too.

Louise: And would a quick settlement help or would a long settlement help? Either of these questions are much better than saying why they are selling. Most agents will not like to answer the question of why are they selling but they're happy to tell you, yes, a quick settlement would help or no, the vendor would prefer a longer settlement because they haven't sold so they want a 120 days or you can put in then and this helps you with your negotiating.