Domain APARTMENTS KATHERINE TOWNSEND

REVIEW

Key tips for first-timers

The Great Australian Green & Guide to Buying Your First Home
Peter Booth
Slatery Media Group
$25

BETWEEN price class, Internet-bred buyers and competition, first home buyers have got it pretty tough right now. That means information and preparation are more important than ever. Peter Booth's The Great Australian Green is a no-nonsense guide to a long-neglected need for impartial, factual advice.

Unlike so many property books out there, this is not a walk but a how-to manual for getting into the market for those with no experience.

Booth, who has spent more than 30 years in the banking, finance and property sectors, offers step-by-step advice on working out your spending capacity, getting the right loan, researching, negotiating, buying it second-hand and more. Each phase of the process is stilll dissected, layed out, the pros and cons.

There are also tips on managing your home loan and covering with lenders if you run into trouble.

CHRIS VEDELAGO

ALESSON IN CONVERSIONS

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Auction 11.30am, May 28
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This former inner-city school gets an A-plus for innovation.

Old building tops the class

The closure of inner-city schools in the early 1990s – when falling enrolment numbers forced families and council to sell the buildings – led to an apartment-building boom, with some conversion of old-school buildings.

Schools' elegant exteriors and large rooms make a good canvas for residential conversion and the apartments within the former South Melbourne Primary School in Dorcas Street show how well it can be done.

The 1880 neo-Gothic building has a classic and ornate exterior, with two levels off the street and two living areas, into what was once one large classroom. The lower level opens into an entry hall that has a powder room to the left and a gable kitchen, fitted with timber and brick – popular a decade ago.

The rest of the room is a living and dining area with stairs off on the side wall. Timber floors and metal and wood-contoured stains keep the look simple.

The main level has two bedrooms, large laundry and the original main room and the adjoining main bathroom, with an ensuite and built-in wardrobes, on the middle level.

This cozy living area features light from over the old and the bathroom is full of white leases.

The top floor is up with the pigeons, with the stairs coming onto a verandah that has a solid one-size – with some of the school's original floor coverings – and two windows, fitted to the older roof to allow light and for air to escape. This level has two bathrooms, at right angles to each other, with a good-sized laundry and a family bathroom below in the corner.

Both bathrooms are adequate size and the location of the ten has a catwalk for a window looking into the schools former tower (Cantle's), its old المملكة and pigeon roosting.

Amazing to see the open for inspection, I attended were families upstairs looking at the school's crowns, drawn by its proximity to things such as South Melbourne Market and Albert Park.

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