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Welcome to the monthly Property Profile Group newsletter!

As Australia's strongest and most dynamic collection of independent real estate agencies, we publish this newsletter to inform and excite readers about the property market. Included are articles, facts and figures on industry news and helpful property-related hints and tips. As always, we value your feedback, so please be in touch with any ideas and suggestions.



## Women: an important buyer force in the property market

Recent research indicates that more women are testing the waters of the property market on their own. Data released by RAMS Home Loans shows that more Australian women have decided to buy property by themselves in 2010 than in preceding years. The numbers have increased to almost half of the sole applications for home lending filed last year. The split has previously been around 70/30, with men making up the 70%.

It seems that a greater number of Australian women now feel more comfortable and knowledgeable about the entire property buying process. Perhaps it's a combination of more education, cash and confidence that has helped shift the balance of property buyers. A higher number of marital and relationship breakdowns could also play a part in boosting loan numbers for females, however, the data does not specify if the sole female applicants are in fact single or not.

It appears that women are not just purchasing property to live in either. Many industry experts agree that a rapidly growing number of females are purchasing properties as investments and planning for a financially secure future.

Whilst this latest data suggest a new trend is emerging, it's already widely recognised that women, as part of a family or couple, are often the main decision makers when it comes to purchasing property.



## Safety in embers

Nothing negates the winter chill quite like an open fireplace. Not only are they practical and provide warmth on cool winter nights, but open fires also act as a centerpiece in a living area. In particular, many older, period-style homes often have an open fire in each room complete with iron surrounds and pretty, decorative tiles.

Regardless of your open fire's style, homeowners with a yen for fireside thawing are being urged not to put safety on the backburner. According to industry body Archicentre, many of Australia's 11,000 yearly house fires are preventable — and protecting your bricks, mortar and loved ones starts with changing your smoke detector. [To page 2](#)

**From page 1** The safest detectors are those electrically wired into mains power. Home owners annoyed by false alarms and flat battery beep warnings often disconnect the battery operated alarms or simply do not replace the batteries, warns Archicentre. Smoke detectors also need to be located to suit the design and layout of your home and, ideally, be fitted by an expert.

Similarly, all chimneys and flues require maintenance and if purchasing a period home, it pays to have a professional chimney sweep clean your chimney before lighting a fire. A build up of creosote can not only hinder the efficiency of your open fire, but also create a fire hazard. Old bird's nests and other animal activity in your chimney can also cause problems — the least of which is a room full of smoke!

Regular maintenance of your chimney or flue will increase the safety and efficiency of your unit.

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## Apps for Real Estate?

Searching for what's on at your local cinema? Want to check your heart rate or learn how to speak Spanish? These days you need look no further than your smartphone and the 1000s of apps available for instant download. So what about real estate apps? Well, there's no shortage of them either - the good, the bad, and the ridiculous! Here's a handful of the more useful real estate related apps on offer:



**Dictionary of Real Estate Terms** — new to real estate and not sure what the technical terms mean? This app has got you covered.

**Home Tracker** — Looking for a new home? Home Tracker allows you to document each property in detail as you visit it.

**LoanCalc Free** — a simple loan/financial calculator that can calculate any component of a loan. Included is a handy graphical comparison view.

**Mortgage Calculator** — a mortgage calculator that lets you work out a range of different costs associated with home finance. Calculate your monthly rate, price per square metre, and even your amortisation schedule easily with this app.

**Stamp Duty Australia** — this app instantly calculates the stamp duty payable on residential or investment properties across all states and territories in Australia.

Smartphone user beware, there's no app that can replace professional advice from an experienced real estate agent!



## Unlocking the past

Who owned your house before you? How much did they pay for it? What about 50 or 100 years ago (if your home is that old)?

These are questions often asked by home owners, especially those who are looking to buy a home or have just purchased a new property. Just like working out your family tree, it's not always simple. There are, however, a range of tools you can use to help in your search.

If you are looking to buy a new home and want to research a suburb's market data such as recent sales and median prices, a good place to start is the Real Estate Institute of Victoria. Detailed statistical information such as individual suburb median prices and price movement graphs are freely available by visiting the Property Research section page of their website at [www.reiv.com.au](http://www.reiv.com.au). Demographic information collated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics is also published on [www.realestateview.com.au](http://www.realestateview.com.au) under the Property Sales Data tab. The more detailed suburb reports involves a fee, starting at \$14.95.

What about the history of the home you own? One rich source of information is the Land Registry (Titles Office). A basic property report is free and can be obtained online at [www.land.vic.gov.au](http://www.land.vic.gov.au). However, if you are after an historic overview of your property, including previous owners and dates of transfer you can attend the office at Level 9, 570 Bourke Street (nearest train station Southern Cross) and ask for an historical search. A small fee may be payable for a copy of the original paper title which will show the dates, names and amounts each time the property was sold.

So, not unlike tracing your personal ancestry, there is no simple answer or method to finding out your house's history; however, there is much to be gleaned if you have the time and tenacity.