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YOUR GREATEST MOVE

A Guide to Downsizing



NoelJones

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A chance to hit 'reset'

For most of us, our first home was most likely a small house in a suburb we could afford or a small flat or apartment that was manageable on our budget at that time.

As years go by, most families typically grow and change, sometimes step families are created and a larger or more suitably located home is required.

Often it can feel like your home isn't big enough for everyone and everything you own, then suddenly the children have grown and moved out and you have all this 'space'.

This time of transition can be both joyful—you now have more time to concentrate on you—and emotional, as you adjust to a new family dynamic and a house that is too big.

You may begin to question if you want to continue living in a large house that requires hours of cleaning, gardening, mowing and maintenance. Other priorities could be taking a front seat, like spending more time with the grandchildren, travelling or doing things you love.

The great news is there are plenty of choices for both couples and singles who are considering downsizing their living arrangements.

Why downsize?

There are many reasons why people consider downsizing; their home may be too big for 1 or 2 people, or they want to travel and enjoy life more now they've finished raising children.

Reasons for downsizing might include:

- financial difficulties or desire to pay off the mortgage
- health considerations
- children have moved out of the home
- too much maintenance
- want to reduce household bills/expenses
- current property may not be suitable as ageing progresses—sloping block, stairs, busy road etc
- simply want a change and now's a good a time as any

- current location isn't ideal—want to be closer to their children/grandchildren, public transport, medical centres, shopping centres etc
- want the support/security of a lifestyle village or assisted living centre

Downsizing comes with many benefits including potentially freeing up time and money, as well as reducing living expenses and property maintenance. However there can be another side to downsizing which isn't talked about—fears and emotion.

The ups and downs of downsizing

While some people embrace change and run at it head first, others resist it. We're all different and we'll all have our own experience and feelings about downsizing when the time comes.

Some people will choose to remain in the home where many happy memories were created while raising a family, others will be open to moving to a smaller home or lifestyle village knowing the memories will remain in their hearts forever, no matter where they live.

Natural fears

It's perfectly natural to experience some fear and anxiety when considering moving into a new home—this can happen no matter what your age, gender or circumstance.

If you're moving from a home where you raised children it may feel overwhelming to leave behind rooms and backyards that trigger wonderful memories. Rest assured those memories won't suddenly be erased when you move and if you prefer, you can take plenty of photos of your family home before you move on. Better yet, when marketing your property pay extra to have a video made and ask for a copy.

Other fears can include; leaving an area and neighbours you're familiar with, not liking your new neighbours and not being able to find a place you 'love'. These fears are perfectly normal and are experienced by many people.

Family input

In some circumstances it may be your family that is resistant to the family home being sold. Be open and honest with them as they may be experiencing difficulty in accepting their parent/s are ageing. Let them know how you feel and what your

needs are and invite them to work through the process with you.

Some children may feel you're 'getting rid of the place' they had a happy childhood in. Ask them to pitch in and pay for a property video to be filmed when putting the home on the market or make your own home video with each person talking about their memories and what they loved about living there. Along with professionally shot real estate photos, you'll have plenty of keepsakes to remember the family home.

Possessions

For some, downsizing can mean having to give up their prized possessions because they simply won't fit into their new home. This alone can result in some people staying put in a house that's too big to manage as they age.

If you feel parting with possessions might hold you back there is plenty you can do. Begin with the small stuff—tackle a cupboard or drawer (or even a room) per week and decide what can be thrown out or donated. Make sure you're not replacing these items by shopping for new things.

If large items of furniture will be your sticking point, consider taking photos and making a memory scrapbook. If items

have a family significance i.e. were handed down, ask your children and other family members if they're interested in 'adopting' them.

Peter Walsh from Channel Ten's The Living Room has plenty of valuable advice for tackling downsizing and parting with possessions that have emotional significance. Check out his website for ideas: peterwalshdesign.com or purchase his book 'Let it Go - Downsizing your way to a Richer, Happier Life'.

Cost

Moving costs money, however, there are areas where you can cut corners and areas where you shouldn't.

In order to get the best price possible for your home you may need to make repairs or improvements or even renovate your kitchen and bathroom, particularly if your

home is older. Before embarking on any changes consult with a property agent as to the value of the home 'as is' and their opinion as to what the value might increase by should you renovate. This will enable you to crunch the figures and assess if renovating will add value.

Other moving costs may include; marketing your property, real estate agent fees, staging your property, removalist, loan payout fees, stamp duty on your next property or retirement village fees.

Independence

If you're downsizing from a home to a lifestyle village or assisted living facility, you may be concerned about losing your independence. It's important to assess the pros and cons of moving anywhere, including to a facility where some of the decisions may no longer be your own.





I'm ready to downsize—what's next?

So you're ready to downsize? Fantastic. If you've been putting it off you'll probably wonder why you didn't do it sooner. Like any important life decision, this one requires research and planning in order to make an informed decision that's right for you and your circumstances.

Location

Where you will live will be one of the first things on your mind and may dictate what kind of housing is available to purchase.

You may want to remain in the same area because you're familiar with everything and it's a great location that will suit you as you get older.

On the other hand, you might have children who have moved away and you want to be closer to the grandchildren. Or you feel it's finally time to follow your dream and pursue that 'seachange' or 'treechange' you've dreamed about.

Whatever your preference, it's a good idea to research the area (even if you already live in it) and honestly assess its

suitability as you age. If you had to give up driving due to health reasons is public transport nearby? Are medical centres easily accessible? Will you have access to seniors groups and centres or other social activities?

Size

How many bedrooms you need? Will you have guests/grandchildren stay? Is one bathroom enough? Storage is also another thing to consider—how much will you need? The answers to these questions may dictate what type of dwelling you choose as your next home.

Type of dwelling

After deciding on an area, you will need to assess the type of dwelling or living arrangement that appeals to you most and what will suit your current and future needs. Some of the options are:

- apartment
- unit
- townhouse
- house with less bedrooms and living space that you currently have
- lifestyle village
- aged care facility

You might be open to a few types of housing, so start a 'downsizing' journal or notebook to help you see things clearly as you move through the process. Jot down the choices that appeal to you most and include a list of pros and cons for each. For example you might like the idea of living in a townhouse but the stairs might be a hassle as you get older. Then again, they might keep you fit!

Maintenance

Moving to a smaller property will likely mean less property maintenance. This could be a result of the block and/or dwelling being smaller or the building being newer. If you're moving to a dwelling that is part of a group, it's important to find out if there will be limitations on what you can and can't do to your property. Is there a body corporate? If so, what are the rules? What will be covered in your monthly fees and which things will you have to take care of yourself?

Choosing to live in a lifestyle village will likely free you up from most forms of maintenance and you can get on with enjoying this part of your life.

Finance

It's important to seek professional advice to ensure your finances are in order and you're equipped with knowledge about the current value of your property along with what you can afford.

You may need to talk to:

- a Solicitor who can advise you or prepare any contracts regarding your move
- an Accountant who can assess your current and future living costs including any expenses associated with aged care facilities or lifestyle villages
- a Real Estate Agent who can appraise your home and advise on property styles that are available in the area you're moving to
- a relative or friend who can help you with any paperwork or personal concerns



Keep a 'downsizing' journal or notebook to help with the decision making process and to keep you on track as you begin to make the move to a smaller property.

Independent property versus lifestyle village

Once you've decided on where you want to live and the type of home you'll need, it's time to move on to the next phase.

Independent property

If you've decided a smaller home or property is right for you, then it's time to consult with a real estate agent. Even if you're not ready for an immediate move, it can be beneficial to obtain advice to assist you with planning and timing.

A professional real estate agent will take the time to listen to your story, understand how you've chosen to live in the past and what your hopes and needs are for the future.

He or she will not only discuss your current home—how you can maximize your chances at getting a decent sale price and what its current value is—but also talk about options for your next home.

Noel Jones Real Estate has offices located throughout the eastern suburbs and our agents have access to information about off-market properties, when land is being released, new apartment builds and more.

Once you've met with an agent, they can keep you informed regarding properties that come on the market that may suit your needs.

Lifestyle village

Lifestyle villages and resorts can offer attractive, quality finished homes that are filled with light and feature low-maintenance gardens and courtyards. Homes can range from one-bedroom cottages to spacious four-bedroom houses with plenty of space for when family and friends come to stay.

Many independent living villages feel more like luxury resorts, with swimming pools and spas, bowling greens and tennis courts, on-site cafés and a host of entertainment options. There are often playgrounds to keep grandchildren amused and men's sheds to continue hobbies and pick up new ones. In many, you'll also find gyms and libraries, billiard tables, hairdressing salons, art classes, movie nights, bush walks, choirs, card groups, regular day trips and even group holidays.

Questions to ask

Most people who chose independent living do so as a lifestyle choice and not as an investment for creating wealth. Therefore, it's vital that you understand the contract agreement and get relevant legal and financial advice before proceeding.

To help understand the facility contract, it's useful to ask the following questions:

Is the village under an ownership or lease structure?

Ownership structures offer you the security of a strata title, but usually attract higher stamp duty. Lifelong leases are a more common option and your rights



as leaseholder are protected by the Retirement Villages Act.

What's in the contract?

Make sure you fully understand the terms of the contract including deposits, cooling off period and settlement period. Also check that your settlement period gives you plenty of time to sell your current home if necessary.

What are the service and exit fees?

Service and maintenance fees are normally paid monthly and vary between properties. They're usually adjusted annually based on CPI increases and are designed to cover general seasonal maintenance, management costs and long-term capital improvements to the village.

Exit fees may be charged when you leave a retirement or lifestyle village and include

work required to your home, selling costs by the village management and any amounts due to the operator at the time of sale.

Often you will be presented with options regarding financial arrangements, so it's important to ask the village's salesperson to fully explain how these work and also get your own independent legal and/or financial advice.

Downsizing can result in less time maintaining a home and more time spent doing what you love.



How a Noel Jones Agent can help you

If downsizing is something you're considering now or in the future, a Noel Jones Real Estate agent can help you by:

- providing an appraisal of your property
- suggesting how you can improve your home for a successful sale
- discussing options for smaller properties
- sharing expert information about suburbs you're thinking of moving to
- connecting you with services such as handymen, gardeners, removalists, home stagers etc
- providing information regarding lifestyle villages in the eastern suburbs

To find your nearest Noel Jones real estate agent see the back cover of this book.

Find your nearest office

We trust this booklet has been helpful in navigating through the 'downsizing' decision making process.

We look forward to the opportunity of working with you, as you make the move to a new home.

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289 Whitehorse Road
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532 Station Street
(03) 9899 6466

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702 Doncaster Road
(03) 9848 7888

Mitcham

560 Mitcham Road
(03) 9837 4444

Wantirna

10/322 Mountain Hwy
0422 633 302

Blackburn

67-69 Railway Road
(03) 9877 1855

Camberwell

883 Toorak Road
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265 Maroondah Hwy
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