



HELEN CHRISTIE

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Helen Christie and her husband bought their first investment property in their 40s using equity from their home - but were keenly aware of everything that could go wrong

●●● Almost as soon as she decided she wanted to invest in property to secure a financial future for herself and her family, Helen also realised how little she knew about what to do next.

“The more I looked into property investment, the more confused I got,” she concedes. “So I started to read investment magazines to learn. The more I read, the more I realised what I didn't know - I didn't even know what capital growth was, or how rental yields worked.

“The more I read, the more I realised that I could potentially make a big mistake here and, being in my 40s, I really didn't have time to make mistakes.”

To alleviate her fears of making a financial misstep and minimise their risk, Helen and her husband employed Melbourne-based buyer's agent Cate Bakos.

“I had no clue at all - no clue at all - so I really needed help,” Helen says.

The couple had worked hard to pay down their principal place of residence, so were in a position to extract equity from their home to purchase their first investment property.

“It was either go out and buy more

shoes for myself and waste the money, or do something for our future and for our kids' future and so it just kind of made sense. To us, buying an investment property seemed like the next logical financial step. We wanted our money to start working for us.”

Margaret Lomas, founder of Destiny, says a lot of people in situations similar to Helen's are getting started in their 40s because they've been spending time building their careers and raising their families.

Any extra cash, which could be used for investment purposes, is often then poured back into their principal place of residence, Ms Lomas says.

“Some people believe that owning their own home is enough,” she explains. “They have been spending all their time and resources gaining equity in this home, or continuously upgrading to a better family home, thus using up all their equity and savings this way.”

Ms Lomas says as people get older, they suddenly realise they may need to do more.

“As retirement grows closer and it becomes more and more obvious that there may not be sufficient funds to retain and maintain their present

financial position, the importance of investing begins to grow and becomes impossible to ignore,” she says.

Helen concedes that it would have been easier if she'd gotten started sooner.

“I was worried because I couldn't afford to make a mistake at this stage,” she says. “That's why we wanted to do it quickly and get professional advice. I didn't want to stuff it up.”

Despite her fears of getting it wrong, Helen is happy with her first investment property, which she purchased in August this year.

“The way I found the property was kind of a little bit of luck really. I took my daughter to ballet class, I had an hour to kill and I was driving through Flemington. I saw a 'For Sale' sign, so I looked it up on the internet and the inspection was in 10 minutes. So I thought I may as well just go look at it.

“When I saw it I thought it ticked all the boxes as an investment, but I wasn't sure because I was still learning about investment properties.”

Helen then contacted Cate, her buyer's agent and property mentor, to get her approval.

“It's in a great location,” says Helen. “It's a nice residential street. It's walking distance to public transport and cafés. Plus (and this is my husband's favourite thing) it's low maintenance. We didn't want a fixer-upper because we don't have time.”

Helen says the unit also offered two “decent-sized” bedrooms, which set it apart from other two-bedroom options.

Helen and her husband would like to purchase again in the next six months. Helen says they will likely use equity from their home again, but ultimately they'd like to move away from this.

“Once we have two investment properties humming along and growing in value, we'll stop using our house and use the equity in the investment properties instead.

“We have a really good mortgage broker, John Bruitzman from Select A Mortgage, who has given us some excellent tips. I'm trying to learn a lot from people who know what they're talking about because we didn't know anything really.”