

The Ultimate First Home Buyer Guide Australia



Published June 2026

AMIE PARKER
MORTGAGE BROKER

SHE'S GOT THE KEYS MORTGAGE SOLUTIONS



TABLE OF CONTENTS



<u>Introduction</u>	03
<u>Your Journey</u>	04
<u>20% Deposit Pathway</u>	05
<u>What Is LMI</u>	06
<u>Buying With a Smaller Deposit</u>	07
<u>First Home Super Saver Scheme</u>	08
<u>Upfront Costs pt 1</u>	09
<u>Upfront Costs pt 2</u>	10
<u>Stamp Duty</u>	11
<u>Established vs New Build</u>	12
<u>Owner-Occupied vs Investing</u>	13
<u>Borrowing Capacity Vs Real Life</u>	14
<u>Employment and Income</u>	15
<u>Getting Ready to Apply</u>	16
<u>Common Mistakes</u>	17
<u>Pre-Approval</u>	18
<u>What is the Process with a Mortgage Broker</u>	19
<u>Book a Discovery Call</u>	20



Buying your first home can feel overwhelming...

I remember what it was like buying my first home. I wish I had access to a guide like this. This guide explains deposits, Lenders Mortgage Insurance, upfront costs, borrowing capacity, getting ready to apply, handy tips, common mistakes and when to see a mortgage broker.



Hi, my name is Amie. I'm a Mortgage Broker and I own She's Got the Keys Mortgage Solutions. I work remotely in Orange, NSW, and can service clients Australia wide.

I value clear communication, empowering my clients, building client relationships for life and integrity. If you have any questions about buying your home, please book in for a free, no obligation discovery call through my website below.

The information in this guide is general in nature and does not take into account your personal objectives, financial situation or needs. You should consider whether the information is appropriate for your circumstances and seek independent advice if required.

Copyright © 2026 by She's Got the Keys Mortgage Solutions All rights reserved. This eBook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This eBook may not be re-sold, shared, or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please direct them to shesgotthekeys.com.au to download their own copy. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

*“The ache for a home lives in all of us. Where we
can go as we are and not be questioned.”*

MAYA ANGELOU

Where are you in your journey?

- Are you wanting to buy in the next 3 months, 6 months or closer to 12 months?
- Are you already looking online or attending open homes?
- Are you buying with someone or buying solo? Have either of you previously owned a property?
- Where are you hoping to buy?
- What property type: established, new build, house and land, unit, townhouse?
- What are your rough budget and suburb expectations?
- Is your goal owner-occupied or rentvesting?

If you are...	You may need to focus on...
Just starting to think about buying	Deposit options, savings habits, credit score
Saving but not sure how much you need	Upfront costs, Lenders Mortgage Insurance, schemes, borrowing power
Already inspecting properties	Pre-approval, repayment comfort, offer strategy
Ready to buy soon	Documents, lender choice, solicitor/conveyancer, settlement costs



THE 20% DEPOSIT PATHWAY

Traditionally, home buyers would save a 20% deposit, plus upfront costs to purchase their home. For a \$300,000 property, this could mean a deposit of \$60,000 + upfront costs. However, property prices have increased significantly over recent years, and for many, saving a 20% deposit puts home ownership years out of reach. There are benefits and risks/downsides to saving a 20% deposit to purchase a home:

Saving a 20% deposit (plus upfront costs)	
Benefits	Risks/downsides
You will avoid Lenders Mortgage Insurance	It can take much longer to save a 20% deposit
You will have a lower loan-to-value ratio (there are benefits to this)	Property prices may move while you are saving
There may be more lender options	Renting for longer may have its own cost
You may potentially have a stronger application	Some buyers delay unnecessarily because they don't know about other pathways that exist

The days where every first home buyer must save a 20% deposit to get into the market are behind us. If you want to explore your options for getting into the market with a smaller deposit, please contact me.



WHAT IS LENDERS MORTGAGE INSURANCE (LMI)?

Lenders Mortgage Insurance is insurance that protects the lender, not the borrower, if the borrower defaults and the property sale does not cover the outstanding loan. It is a cost that is paid if the loan to value ratio is above 80% (for example, if you had a 10% deposit and needed to borrow 90% of the property value).

To give you a rough idea, for a \$1,000,000 property, with a 10% deposit of \$100,000 (plus upfront costs) for a first home buyer over a 30-year term with a loan of \$900,000, the approximate Lenders Mortgage Insurance payable would be \$18,785.45. This is an estimate from the Helia LMI online calculator, and is a guide only. Actual LMI payable is calculated at time of application.

LMI is not automatically 'bad'. It is a cost that needs to be weighed against the benefits of buying sooner.

Lenders Mortgage Insurance	
Potential Benefits	Potential Risks
Buy sooner	Higher loan balance/repayments if it is incorporated into the loan
You could pay LMI and keep more cash in your offset/savings	LMI can be expensive and is usually non-refundable
Avoid waiting years saving a 20% deposit	Less equity buffer if property values fall



BUYING WITH A SMALLER DEPOSIT

(AND AVOIDING LMI)

Sometimes, you can have your cake and eat it too. If you don't have a 20% deposit, there may be a pathway available for you where you won't have to pay lenders mortgage insurance. This may be through a government scheme, a specific lender policy or with family assistance. Eligibility criteria apply and this is subject to application approval.

Ways First Home Buyers May Be Able to Avoid LMI	
Australian Government 5% Scheme	The current government scheme allows eligible first home buyers to buy with as little as a 5% deposit without LMI. Currently the scheme has no place limits and no income caps, however property price caps apply depending on postcode.
2% Deposit Option for Single Parents/Legal Guardians	The Australian Government 5% Deposit Scheme also includes a pathway for eligible single parents or legal guardians with a minimum 2% deposit.
Professional LMI waivers	Some lenders may waive LMI or have a different LMI threshold for certain professions, depending on the lender's policy. This is subject to the individual application.
Family Guarantee/Family Pledge	A family guarantee, sometimes called a family pledge, is where a close family member uses equity in their own property as extra security for your home loan, helping you buy sooner without needing to gift you cash.

Eligibility criteria, scheme availability and price caps may change. The information provided here is general in nature and does not take into account your personal objectives, financial situation or needs. You should seek independent advice to determine whether a scheme or other LMI waiver option is suitable for your circumstances.

FIRST HOME SUPER SAVER SCHEME

The First Home Super Saver Scheme, often called FHSS, is a government scheme that may help you save for your first home through super.

The basic idea is that you can make extra voluntary contributions into your super fund, either before tax through salary sacrifice or after tax from your own money, and later apply to release eligible amounts to help buy or build your first home. This can be helpful because money contributed through super may be taxed at lower rates compared with saving the same amount in a regular bank account. It is not free money, but it can be a useful strategy for some first home buyers who are actively saving.

There are limits on how much can count towards the scheme. You may be able to contribute up to \$15,000 per financial year and up to \$50,000 in total, plus an amount of calculated earnings. Employer super guarantee contributions and spouse contributions cannot be released under the scheme.

To be eligible, you generally need to be 18 or older when you apply to release the money, have never owned property in Australia before, plan to live in the home, and have made eligible voluntary contributions into your super. Your name must also be on the title of the property you buy.

Timing is really important. You need to request an FHSS determination through myGov before your property contract is completed, which is generally settlement. If you sign a contract before requesting release of the funds, you usually have 90 days from the contract date to lodge the release request.

Once you request the release, it can take around 15 to 20 days to receive the money, assuming there are no issues. You then generally have 12 months to sign a contract to buy or build a home, although an extension may be available. The FHSS can also be used alongside other first home buyer schemes, which is why it is worth understanding early rather than leaving it until you are ready to make an offer.

This is one of those areas where good timing and accurate information really matter, so it is worth checking your eligibility and speaking to your super fund, accountant or financial adviser before relying on it as part of your deposit strategy.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY ‘UPFRONT COSTS’?

So you have your deposit, great! But there are other costs to consider when purchasing a home that you will need in addition to your deposit. These will vary slightly by state and situation, and should be explained to you by your mortgage broker and Conveyancer, but please always double check.

Upfront costs of buying a home - in addition to deposit	
Stamp Duty	A mandatory state tax on property and land transfers
Land Transfer fee/Registration fee	A government fee which covers the legal title transfer- varies by state currently approximately \$148-\$446
Lender Fees	Varies by lender - this should be discussed with your broker but these are fees for setting up your loan
Conveyancer/Solicitor	Varies by Conveyancer/Solicitor but usually around the \$2000-\$3000 mark
Building and Pest Inspection	I highly recommend getting your own B&P inspection for the property you purchase and not relying on one from the vendor. These are usually around \$500-\$800+ but can save you a lot of money in the future.
Strata Report	I recommend getting this for your Conveyancer to review if the property you purchase is under strata. Cost varies, enquire with the Real Estate Agent selling the property for strata manager contact details.

Upfront costs of buying a home - in addition to deposit (continued)

Bank Valuation	Varies depending on the lender, property and type of valuation required. Anywhere from \$0-\$1000+
Risk fees/LMI	As discussed on page 6
Moving Costs	Varies depending how much stuff you have and how far you are moving! \$1,000-\$15,000+
Insurance	The lender will require a certificate of insurance for the property you have purchased prior to settlement. I recommend looking into how much your new property will cost to insure before you put an offer in, particularly if it is in a flood or bushfire zone.
Emergency Buffer	I recommend having at least \$10,000 as a buffer for post settlement. Nothing like the hot water system breaking the week after you move in.
Rates and tax adjustments	Cost varies, set aside around \$1,500 for this, your Conveyancer will confirm.
Mortgage Broker Fees	If your Mortgage Broker charges you a fee, this must be disclosed upfront via a Credit Quote. I work under a structure where I do not charge a fee, I am paid a commission by the lender you choose when your loan settles. The commission amount will be disclosed to you prior to application.

STAMP DUTY/TRANSFER DUTY



Stamp Duty, also known as transfer duty, can be the biggest upfront cost in purchasing a home. Stamp duty is a state based tax for the transfer of property and land, and the amount is calculated on a sliding scale based on the purchase price of a property, location and loan purpose. It can cost in the tens of thousands of dollars.

As a first home buyer, you may be entitled to a concessional rate of transfer duty or you may be exempt from paying it.

Concessions, grants and exemptions vary by State and eligibility criteria apply, for example price caps on properties or whether the property is new or established. Stamp duty is a cost that needs to be paid upfront, so if you are paying it you will need to have it saved in addition to your deposit.

The button below takes you to the Stamp Duty page on my website, which has links to each state government's page with information on their respective first home buyer Stamp Duty concessions.

[SGTK Website](#)

BUYING AN ESTABLISHED PROPERTY VS A NEW BUILD



Buying Established	Building or Buying New
Usually easier to inspect and understand	May be able to access certain grants/concessions depending on state and eligibility
Settlement may be quicker	Can be more energy efficient
Less construction risk	Risk of delays, variations, builder issues, valuation concerns and costs blowing out
May need repairs or renovations sooner	Construction loans work differently to standard home loans

Lender policies may differ for house-and-land packages, off the plan purchases and construction loans.

OWNER OCCUPIED VS INVESTING



- Owner occupied usually means you intend to live in the property.
- Investment means you intend to rent it out.
- Rentvesting means to purchase a property to rent out in an area you can afford, while continuing to rent in an area you desire to live in, such as close to your work.
- Interest rates, deposit requirements, government schemes and grants may differ for investment loans vs owner occupied loans.
- Many first home buyer schemes require you to live in the property.
- If you choose to buy a property to rent out as an investment while continuing to live with your parents rent free, most lenders will still assume that you pay something called 'notional rent' which is a small amount of rent each month (the amount varies with each lender). This must be taken into account when determining the size of the loan you can service.

BORROWING CAPACITY VS REAL LIFE AFFORDABILITY

What the bank says you can borrow and what feels comfortable in real life are not always the same thing.

Banks look at:	You should also think about:
Income	Lifestyle
Expenses	Future kids
Dependants	Job changes
Credit Cards	Pets
Personal Loans	Travel
Car Loans	Renovations
HECS/HELP Debt	Emergency savings
Buy Now/Pay Later	Rate rises
Existing Property Debt	Whether repayments still feel okay if life gets expensive
Interest Rate Buffers	

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Different lenders have different policies to suit different borrowers. This is especially true when it comes to assessing different types of income across varied employment structures and professions. As a Mortgage Broker I have access to over 30 lenders on my panel.

Examples of income types that can be treated differently

PAYG base salary	Casual Income
Overtime	Commission
Bonuses	Self-Employed Income
Probation Periods	Second Jobs
Contractor Work	Centrelink/Family tax benefits
Child Support	Government Allowances
Allowances (e.g travel, laundry)	Non-taxable income (e.g salary packaging for a NFP)

A decline from one lender does not always mean you cannot borrow. It may mean we need to try to find a lender whose policy fits your situation.

GETTING READY TO APPLY

In the 12 months leading up to applying for a home loan, there are some things that I would recommend doing:

I like to call it: financial housekeeping	
Check your credit score	A credit score is a number that helps lenders determine the risk of lending you money. It is calculated using your personal credit history including loans, credit cards, payment habits and credit applications. Consumers can check theirs for free every 3 months through Equifax Australia.
Check your credit report for errors, and repair if necessary	Check your report for any accounts that are still open that should be closed, or any defaults that are errors. These should initially be addressed directly with the lender.
Reduce your credit card limits	Lenders assess credit cards based on the total limit, not the balance. Reducing the limit or closing the card can improve serviceability.
Close unused buy now, pay later accounts	Again, these are assessed based on the limit and can reduce your serviceability. If you don't need them, close them.
Show regular savings	Depending on lender policy, some want to see demonstrated regular savings. For some lenders, good rental payment history may count towards demonstrated regular savings.
Keep clean bank statements	These will likely be assessed when you apply for your loan.

COMMON FIRST HOME BUYER MISTAKES

Read this before you go any further into your home buying journey

Assuming you need a 20% deposit	A 20% deposit has its benefits- but it is not always a requirement to get into the market
Assuming the lowest interest rate is always the best option	There are a lot of things to look at in addition to interest rate- lender policy, fees, serviceability, how quickly the lender will assess/approve the application + more.
Making offers before getting pre-approval	Don't get caught out- this can get very stressful very fast
Forgetting stamp duty and upfront costs	Especially if you are buying a property outside of the price cap for stamp duty grants and concessions
Maxing borrowing capacity without considering real-life affordability	You will potentially have these repayments every month for the next 30 years. That is a lot of months to be eating noodles.
Opening buy now pay later accounts, credit cards or enquiring about loans before applying	All of these enquiries will show up on your credit report and potentially lower your credit score.
Using all savings and leaving no emergency buffer	It's Murphy's law- whatever can happen will happen. Better to have the buffer and not use it than not have the buffer and need it.
Not understanding scheme rules before signing a contract	You don't want to suddenly have to cough up thousands of dollars for Lenders Mortgage Insurance because you didn't understand your obligations.

PRE-APPROVAL TIMING (AND WHEN TO SEE A MORTGAGE BROKER)

Pre-approval is where a lender gives you conditional approval to purchase a property for a certain price. I recommend having pre-approval in place before you start inspecting properties, so that when you find the perfect place, you are in a position to put in an offer.

Pre-approval usually lasts for 90 days, but can be extended in some circumstances. Pre-approval gives you confidence to negotiate but you are still subject to application and receiving unconditional approval for the loan once you have a contract of sale.

If you are considering buying your first home, see a broker early if:

- You are unsure how much deposit you need
- You have any loans or debt
- You are casual, self-employed, on probation, a contract worker or have multiple income sources
- You want to use a government scheme
- You are buying with a low deposit
- You want to understand your comfortable repayment range or borrowing capacity
- You have questions about the home buying process



WHAT IS THE PROCESS WITH She's Got the Keys Mortgage Solutions



1. Book a free 'first home buyer' discovery call by going to my website.
2. We will have a chat about where you are at in your journey, and I can answer general questions.
3. If it makes sense, I will provide you with the credit guide and privacy consent forms to sign. I will send you a link to my secure portal.
4. You will upload documents securely.
5. I will assess your borrowing capacity and options.
6. We will have a meeting to compare suitable pathways, and I will provide a recommendation in a detailed document.
7. If you are ready, we will work towards pre-approval or formal approval.

This journey could go over a few weeks or 12 months, depending on what stage you are at. I will work at your pace. Once your loan settles, I will check in for annual loan reviews, to ensure your loan is still working for your situation.

You do not need to have everything figured out before speaking with a broker. That is what I am here to help with.

There is something permanent, and something extremely profound, in owning a home.

KENNY GUINN



HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT YOUR SITUATION?

Everyone's circumstances are different, and general information can only go so far.

If you'd like to talk through your situation, you're welcome to book a free discovery call.


This is simply a conversation to discuss your goals and help you understand possible next steps.

The information in this guide was correct at the date of publication in June 2026 and the information is subject to change. The information in this guide is general in nature and you should seek personalised advice prior to obtaining any financial product to ensure it is suitable for you.

[Book a discovery call](#)

 www.shesgotthekeys.com.au

 aparker@shesgotthekeys.com.au

 [0492 977 461](tel:0492977461)

