

# The Real Estate Wrap

## With Leanne Pilkington

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### Has spring come early?

If you managed to get out and about over the weekend to any of the auctions or open homes in your neighbourhood, you would have been wise to slip, slop, slap. At least as far as the weather is concerned, it appears spring is here.

It is, to an extent, reflected in the numbers.

CoreLogic data shows Sydney's preliminary clearance rate was 56.5% on 572 auctions, down from 59.1% last week, but still respectable in the context of recent times. Media reports suggest vendors are increasingly willing to listen to early offers from buyers looking to get in before auction day, adding another dose of optimism to the picture.

And why not? If the price makes sense, it's a positive move for vendors to get in and out of the market quickly and avoid the extra competition that a spring campaign invariably brings.

### Prices holding firm

Across the board, in Sydney at least, prices remain flat. On a weekly basis, this is the first time since June there's been no movement, according to CoreLogic. Year to date, they are down on the previous year, though this is to be expected as the market retracts from the unsustainable heat of years past.

We see a level power balance between buyers and vendors in the current market. Both can have confidence: for vendors, because a fair price can be achieved and for buyers, because there's no pressure to overpay.

Where there is stock available it is selling consistently, and while the average days on market will likely trend upwards as more homes come available in the weeks ahead, so will the number of buyers likely increase.

A steady price environment at this time of year, against this macroeconomic backdrop, is, above all, a sign of strength for the housing market.

### Energetic politics but no action

The National Energy Guarantee is the issue of the day, one that we're lead to believe could even topple the Prime Minister. Not too long ago, housing affordability was earmarked as the hot button issue upon which political parties, State and Federal, would either rise or fall.

Yet we await a serious policy response to housing affordability in Australia as the political tide turned before real action could eventuate. All the while, those in established housing are being offered no real incentive to downsize and free up houses for families on the grow, and the difficulty in accumulating a deposit is seeing an entire generation throw in the towel.

So, yes, energy prices are having an impact on the cost of living. But if people give up on the home ownership dream, the economic cost could be far more damaging. We need policies before politics.

### Final thought

If you're weighing up selling your property, you've probably read numerous lists of tips to help you present your home in the best possible light. A coat of paint here, a splash of colour there, trim the lawn, light a candle or bake some bread to trigger buyers' senses.

Each of these ideas has merit but they pale in significance when it comes to the most important decision vendors face: choosing an agent. This spring, if you're looking to sell, don't ask an agent what price they think they can get you. Ask them how they will get you that price.

Then let them convince you of the answer. In this market, properties don't sell themselves. The right strategy is crucial.

