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FIRST CALL FOR SELLERS

A GUIDE BY GORDON MACDONALD
AUCTIONEER & FOUNDER, THE AUCTION GROUP



FIRST CALL FOR SELLERS

A SELLER'S GUIDE

FIRST CALL FOR SELLERS



Cutting through the noise to help you make an informed decision about selling your home.

GORDON MACDONALD

Auctioneer & Founder · The Auction Group

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INTRODUCTION

Selling your property is one of the biggest financial decisions you'll ever make. Yet knowing how to sell it has never been more confusing.

Every day we're surrounded by opinions. The media talks about market conditions. Real estate agents recommend different methods of sale. Friends and family share their experiences. Property commentators debate auction clearance rates, the latest government changes and the "best" time to sell. For many property owners, it can feel like a minefield. That's why I wrote this guide.

As a dedicated auctioneer, I've spent more than two decades helping sellers navigate the selling process. During that time, I've had the privilege of working alongside close to 15,000 sellers, and one thing has become very clear: informed sellers make better decisions—and better decisions often lead to better outcomes.

Whether you're considering auction or private treaty, my goal isn't to persuade you to choose one method over another. My goal is to help you understand the process, cut through the noise and make informed decisions with confidence.

My role isn't to sell your property. My role is to create an emotional environment where buyers have the confidence to compete in an open and transparent forum. It is this emotional environment that gives every seller the best opportunity to achieve an exceptional outcome.

I hope this guide provides you with the clarity, knowledge and confidence to make the decisions that are right for you and your family.

— **Gordon Macdonald, Auctioneer & Founder, The Auction Group**



FIRST CALL FOR SELLERS

THE TEAM

ABOUT GORDON MACDONALD

For the last twenty years, I have been dedicated to the craft of auctioneering.

I cut my teeth in a stock and station agency in regional New South Wales before making the move to the Sunshine Coast — an area that, even then, was clearly on the rise, and an exciting place to build a career. I've called this region home ever since, and I've dedicated the majority of my career to Sunshine Coast real estate.

In that time, I've called close to 15,000 auctions. To put that into perspective, that's an average of fifteen auctions a week, forty-eight weeks a year, for two decades. It's a rare vantage point — one that has given me a genuinely deep understanding of the many micro-markets that make up the Sunshine Coast, from units in Golden Beach to riverfront homes in Noosa.

No two markets behave the same way, and I've had the privilege of learning each of them, property by property, auction by auction.

I've sold big cattle stations out in Central Queensland. I've sold \$10–20 million homes in Noosa. I've sold sub-\$1 million properties to first home buyers and investors just getting started.

I've called auctions on some of the finest commercial assets on the Sunshine Coast. I say this not to boast, but because I believe it matters: across every category of property on the Sunshine Coast, we hold the top sales.

That's not luck. It's the product of longevity, and of staying in my lane.

THE TEAM

That specialisation matters for another reason too. I work on a fee-for service basis. Unlike many auctioneers — real estate principal auctioneers, corporate auctioneers, real estate salesperson auctioneers — I don't have a financial interest in whether your property sells on the day. My role is *consultative*.

I'm there to give you good information and honest advice, even when that advice is that today isn't the right day to sell. That's a conversation I'm always willing to have, because it comes from the same place as everything else in this guide: *making sure sellers are genuinely well informed*.

Calling multiple auctions a week doesn't just build experience — it builds relationships. I see the best buyers in the market on a regular basis, because they're regulars on auction day themselves. I also see prospective sellers, who come along to understand how auctions work and to get a feel for how the market is tracking. Being at the coalface like this, week after week, means I can bring sellers genuinely up-to-the-minute market information — not a market report from last quarter, but a real sense of where buyer sentiment sits today.

That timeliness is one of the most valuable things I believe I can offer a seller trying to make a clear-headed decision.

Ultimately, I love what I do. Every auction is different, every property has its own story, and every seller deserves someone in their corner who takes it seriously.

— Gordon Macdonald, Auctioneer & Founder, The Auction Group

OVERVIEW

WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

If you're thinking about selling your home, you don't need me to tell you how much noise there is out there.

Every week brings a new headline. The budget. Interest rates. Changes to legislation. Political commentary dressed up as market analysis. Add in the broader geopolitical noise we're all peppered with daily, and it's no wonder so many sellers feel like their heads are spinning before they've even had their first conversation with an agent.

And underneath all that noise sit some genuinely big decisions. Is now the right time to sell, or should you wait? Which agent do you choose? Do you go to auction, or do you sell by private treaty?

This book won't add to that noise. It's here to cut through it.

I want to strip things back as much as I can — to the fundamentals that actually determine the outcome of a sale, regardless of what's happening in Canberra or on the nightly news. That means talking honestly about buyer psychology, and about who is really in control at each stage of a campaign, from the first open home through to negotiation and settlement. It means talking plainly about how to get the very best price for your home in today's market. And it means walking through the real differences between auction and private treaty, so you understand not just what each method involves, but why that difference matters to your outcome.

None of this is theoretical for me. It's what I see, week in and week out, in rooms full of buyers and sellers just like you. My hope is that by sharing it plainly, I can help you come through the noise and make a genuinely informed decision about selling your home.

Informed sellers make
better decisions — and
better decisions often lead
to better outcomes.

— GORDON MACDONALD

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF COMPETITION

The first step is to find buyers who genuinely love your property.

These are the buyers who can picture themselves living there, raising a family there, entertaining friends or enjoying the lifestyle it offers. At that point, the decision is no longer just logical—it becomes personal.

Finding those buyers is only the beginning. The next step is to place those emotionally connected buyers into an emotional environment.

An emotional environment for buyers can take many forms. It might be a busy open home with dozens of pairs of shoes at the front door. It might be a well-executed marketing campaign that creates anticipation and enquiry. It might be auction day itself, with buyers registering to bid, neighbours gathering to watch, the property presented at its absolute best, and the atmosphere building as the auction is about to begin.

These aren't artificial events. They are genuine signals that other people recognise the same value in the property.

One of the strongest psychological influences on human behaviour is social proof. When buyers see that others are interested in the same property, it reinforces their own belief that they are making a good decision.

We've all experienced it. A busy restaurant attracts more diners than an empty one. A long queue outside a café makes people curious. As the saying goes, "I'll have what she's having." Property is no different.

THE APPROACH

When an emotionally connected buyer is placed in an emotional environment, competition naturally follows. As buyers see others wanting the same property, their confidence grows, their commitment strengthens and they become increasingly determined to secure it.

That is when sellers create the greatest opportunity to achieve the best outcome.

Sometimes, the difference between a logical offer made in isolation and the final selling price achieved through open and transparent competition can be tens—or even hundreds—of thousands of dollars. The difference isn't found in the bricks, the land or the floor plan. It's found in creating the right environment for the right buyers to compete.

CONTROL

WHO'S DRIVING THIS THING?

When you sell your property, one question matters more than almost any other. Who is in control?

Most sellers assume that once they've accepted an offer, the hard part is over. In many private-treaty transactions, however, that's when the balance of power begins to shift.

The buyer and seller first agree on a price, but that price is often only the beginning of the negotiation. The contract may then be subject to finance, building and pest inspections, due diligence or other agreed conditions. During this conditional period, the buyer has the opportunity to satisfy those conditions before deciding whether to proceed.

If finance is delayed, they can request more time. If the building and pest report identifies concerns, they may seek to renegotiate. If circumstances change, they may have grounds not to proceed.

Throughout that period, the seller waits.

The property is effectively taken off the market, other buyers often move on, and the seller has very little influence over the outcome until each condition has been satisfied.

CONTROL

Auction turns that process on its head.

Instead of asking the seller to wait while the buyer completes their investigations, the buyer is encouraged to complete those investigations before auction day.

Finance is organised. Building and pest inspections are completed. The deposit is ready. The contract is understood. The buyer jumps through the hoops first. Only then do they compete to buy the property.

That simple change in the order of events changes everything.

Rather than handing control to the buyer after a price has been agreed, the auction asks buyers to be ready before they bid. If the property sells under the hammer, the seller walks away with the certainty of an unconditional contract instead of entering weeks or months of uncertainty.

That is one of the reasons I have always loved the auction process. It doesn't remove risk—it stacks the odds in our sellers favour. Instead of asking the seller to carry the uncertainty after a price has been agreed, the buyer resolves those uncertainties before they compete.

For sellers, that difference can be enormous.



FIRST CALL FOR SELLERS

WHY TIMING MATTERS

The moment your property hits the market, something remarkable happens. Within minutes, buyers searching on realestate.com.au, Domain and other property websites are notified that a new property has become available.

Thousands of buyers have already told these websites exactly what they're looking for. They receive instant alerts, open the listing, study the photographs, read the description and decide whether your property is worth inspecting.

At that moment, your property is being presented to the largest pool of active buyers it is ever likely to have. These aren't casual browsers. These are buyers actively searching for a property like yours. They are motivated, engaged and hungry for new listings.

That's why the first few weeks of any marketing campaign are so important. The first open home is often the busiest. The second is usually smaller. By the third or fourth open for inspection, most active buyers have already made a decision. They've inspected the property, ruled themselves in or ruled themselves out, and moved on to the next listing. The internet has changed the speed of the property market forever. New listings are discovered within minutes, not weeks. Although print has its place, buyers don't wait for Saturday's newspaper anymore. They receive notifications on their phones, inspect properties almost immediately and quickly move on when something else catches their attention. That's why I believe every property should be sold within a managed timeframe. For me, the sweet spot is around three to four weeks.

That timeframe allows enough opportunity to expose the property to the entire active buyer pool while giving them time to prepare for the auction.

MOMENTUM

As soon as a property remains on the market beyond that initial period, buyer psychology often begins to change.

Instead of asking, “Could this be the one?” They begin asking, “Why hasn’t it sold?”

If enough time passes, buyers naturally begin to wonder whether there’s something wrong with the property, whether it’s overpriced or whether everyone else has already decided to pass. Nobody wants something that nobody else appears to want.

That shift in perception can be incredibly powerful. The property hasn’t changed. The market’s perception of it has.

That’s why I believe time should never be left to chance. A well-managed campaign doesn’t simply create urgency. It captures the attention of the largest possible buyer pool while excitement is at its highest and gives those buyers every opportunity to compete at the same time.

Momentum is difficult to rebuild once it’s lost.

Many sellers tell me, “We’re not in a rush.” And that may be absolutely true. But choosing not to be in a rush is, in itself, a decision to sell later rather than sooner. The important question is this: What is the market likely to do while you wait? If the market is rising, waiting may work in your favour. But if the market begins to soften or retreat, the very same property may be worth less in three or six months than it is today.

If maximising your selling price is important, then selling within a managed timeframe is one of the most important decisions you can make.

PRICE VERSUS NO PRICE

For a long time, auction was the only genuinely accepted “no price” method of sale. This has always been especially true in Queensland, where there is a legislative restriction around providing a price guide with Auction. A buyer walking into an auction campaign understands, without needing it explained, why there’s no price attached. The price will be found on the day, through competition, in front of everyone. It’s transparent, even without a number on the listing.

Private treaty used to be different. Traditionally, it came with a price. You knew what you were being asked to pay, and you negotiated from there.

Over the years, that’s changed. Private treaty has increasingly gravitated toward its own version of “no price” — For Sale headlines, Contact Agent, By Negotiation. On the surface, these look similar to auctions. There’s still no number on the listing.

But the reaction from buyers is entirely different.

When a buyer encounters “no price” in a private treaty context, they don’t experience it the way they do at auction. Instead, they start asking a question that auction never raises: why is there no price here? Is it because the seller wants more than the market will bear, and they’re hiding behind the ambiguity? Is the agent avoiding a number because they know it will scare buyers off?

That suspicion doesn’t exist at auction, because buyers understand exactly why the price isn’t there. It’s not being withheld. It simply hasn’t been decided yet — because it’s going to be decided by them, on the day, through competition.

NEGOTIATING IN THE OPEN

When a buyer bids at auction, they can see exactly where they stand. They can see their competition. They can gauge how strongly the property is being received. They can see who's bidding, whether there are any vendor bids, who currently holds the highest bid, and how many people are still in the race.

There is nowhere to hide, and nothing to guess at.

That transparency matters more than it might first appear. It's a forum buyers can trust, precisely because it's open. And because they can see clearly, they're able to put their very best foot forward with confidence — their eyes wide open, competing on equal terms with everyone else in the room.

Private treaty negotiations, particularly when multiple offers are on the table, work very differently. Picture yourself as a buyer in that position. You submit an offer, and you're told there's another offer — or two — being presented to the seller at the same time. The agent, quite properly, advises you of this and encourages you to put your best foot forward.

But think about what you're actually being asked to do. You're being asked to run at full pace, blindfolded, with no idea where the finish line is or how fast anyone else is running.

Compare that to running the same race with your eyes open, able to see exactly what you need to do to win.

One is measured and confident. The other is *guesswork*.

TRANSPARENCY

Faced with that blindfold, most buyers become conservative. Nobody wants to pay significantly more than the next person might have offered, so offers get pulled back, hedged, softened — not because the buyer doesn't want the property, but because they simply don't know what they're really competing against.

And when they miss out, as many inevitably do, they're left with the same nagging thought: I would have paid more, if only I'd known.

That's the quiet cost of negotiating behind closed doors. It isn't just that some buyers pay less than they might have. It's that the buyers who miss out often walk away with a lingering sense of disappointment — not just in the outcome, but in the agent, the agency, and the seller — because they were never given a genuine, transparent opportunity to compete.

Auction removes that blindfold entirely.

Everyone can see.

Everyone can compete.

And nobody is left wondering what might have been.

THE DEADLINE

Auction day is a very clear deadline.

When we begin the process, we begin with the end in mind. Auction day is set, and everything works backwards from there. It's not unlike planning anything significant in life — a wedding, for example. The date is fixed first, and then a whole host of things need to happen, in the right order, in the time available.

For buyers, that means preparation. Finance sorted. Inspections done. Contracts understood. ***Everything in place well before they step onto the front lawn to compete.*** For sellers, the preparation looks different, but it's just as demanding. You need to dig deep — to genuinely understand what the reserve should be, to process the information in front of me, and to look at your property through the eyes of the buyer rather than through the eyes of the person who's lived there. That means understanding, logically and unemotionally, how the property sits against comparable sales and competing listings currently on the market.

And for the agent, a looming auction day is the highest form of accountability there is. There's no vague timeline to hide behind, no "we'll get there eventually." There's a date, and everyone involved is working toward it.

That's what makes auction day so effective. Everyone is held to the same standard, working toward the same deadline. Buyers are jumping through the hoops, putting themselves in a position to negotiate unconditionally. Sellers are digging deep to genuinely understand their own property and its place in the market. And the agent's job is to make sure the timing lines up perfectly — so that when buyers are ready to buy, the seller is standing on the front lawn, ready to understand exactly what kind of competition is about to unfold in front of them.

An aerial photograph of a large, powerful ocean wave. The water is a deep teal color, and the wave's crest is breaking into white foam. Two small figures of surfers are visible on the wave's face. The overall mood is serene yet powerful.

Everyone is held to the
same standard, working
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— GORDON MACDONALD

THE MAGIC OF AUCTION DAY

Something distinct happens on auction day, and it's the product of everything that's led up to it.

By the time buyers and the seller arrive at the property, weeks of preparation and hundreds of small decisions have already been made on both sides. What forms on the day is a genuinely unique environment — one where every person present shares a single underlying motivation.

The buyers want to buy. The seller wants to sell.

Whether there's one registered bidder on the day or ten, I see the same pattern. Everyone in that environment becomes fully focused on achieving their goal. We choose the day and the time to bring people together, but what happens once they're there goes beyond scheduling — it's the natural result of genuine, motivated buyers competing in the open.

When it's executed well, and the preparation, timing and buyer pool all align, the result can be magic.

As the auctioneer, my role is to be right in the middle of that process — leading the conversation, managing the pace of the negotiation, and keeping things moving toward a result. The buyers and the seller are emotionally invested.

I need to remain the opposite: focused, impartial, and entirely in control of the process, so I can guide it toward its best possible conclusion.



FIRST CALL FOR SELLERS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What happens if we fall short of our reserve price?

If bidding on the day doesn't reach your reserve, the property isn't automatically passed in. Instead, I'll go and negotiate directly with the highest bidder.

At that point, we give them the opportunity to increase their offer. If they do, the property is declared as selling. It's actually quite common, once it's clear the reserve has been reached, for further competitive bidding to follow from there — buyers often aren't finished once they know the property is genuinely 'on the market'. If there's no further bidding beyond that point, the property sells for the agreed amount.

The important thing to remember throughout this process is that you, as the seller, remain in complete control. You set the reserve. You set the terms. Nothing happens without your authority.

How do vendor bids work?

In Queensland, an auctioneer has the legislative authority to place an unlimited number of vendor bids, up until the reserve price is reached. In practice, I rarely place more than one or two, and I'm entirely comfortable using them whenever they're needed. Vendor bids are a tool for keeping control of the negotiation and maintaining momentum.

If nobody comes forward to start the bidding, a vendor bid can open the auction. If the first genuine bid comes in well below the property's true value, a vendor bid can be placed closer to that value, bringing attention, direction and authority back to the process.

FAQs

Vendor bids are a genuinely useful tool, and I use them regularly. The key is transparency. When a vendor bid is placed openly, and the market is clearly aware that it's being made, buyers can trust and understand exactly what's happening. A vendor bid simply tells the room: any genuine bid from here needs to exceed this number.

Do I have to be there on auction day?

We encourage all of our sellers to be present on auction day, and there's a good reason for it. I want you to see, hear and feel firsthand how the market is genuinely responding to your home. There's no substitute for experiencing that in person, and it tends to help sellers feel more confident and connected to the decisions being made throughout the process.

If a negotiation is needed, or if we need to seek your instructions, it's far easier and far more natural to do that face to face than over the phone.

That said, not every seller can be there, and some simply prefer not to be — and that's completely fine. If you're not present, we can seek your instructions verbally over the phone, and the auctioneer is authorised to sign the contract on your behalf in your absence. For sellers who do attend, my recommendation is usually not to stand in the middle of the auction itself.

Somewhere like a back bedroom — close enough to hear what's happening, but out of view of the buyers — tends to be the most comfortable place to be.

What if the property doesn't sell / is passed in?

It's an inevitable reality of auction that a percentage of properties get passed in. That percentage moves around depending on where we sit in the property cycle — it's simply part of how the market works. When bidding doesn't reach reserve, and the negotiation with the highest bidder doesn't result in a sale, the property is passed in. From there, one of two things typically happens.

If there's a genuinely interested buyer, negotiations often continue beyond auction day. If no clear buyer has emerged, we move to seeking out new interest. If we don't sell at auction, selling after auction is very likely, and very possible. In fact, it generally puts control back in the seller's court — provided the newly advertised price reflects the feedback we've gathered throughout the three to four weeks leading up to auction day.

When that price is aligned with the market's thinking, we find post-auction clearance rates are consistently strong. If you're weighing up auction against private treaty, or simply want to understand more about how the auction process works, I'd genuinely love to hear from you. Getting every last penny out of the marketplace for my sellers is something I take enormous pride in, and after twenty years, I'm more passionate about the craft of auctioneering than I have ever been. It's been a privilege to contribute to both the real estate and auctioneering fraternities over that time, and that work is far from over.

I'm always happy to have a discreet, no-pressure conversation about your own situation. You can find me easily at theauctiongroup.com.au

What happens if I get an offer prior to auction?

It's inevitable that somebody will fall in love with your home enough that they'd rather not see it go to auction at all, and will do their best to make you an offer beforehand. Properties do sell prior to auction fairly regularly — but it's a decision that deserves careful consideration, not a quick yes.

If you're anticipating multiple registered bidders, and the campaign has been received exceptionally well, selling prior would be a genuinely risky move. You'd be walking away from the very competition the campaign was designed to create.

On the other hand, sometimes a campaign generates less overall inquiry, but one outstanding buyer emerges and makes a genuinely strong case for your property. If that's the situation you find yourself in, and you're satisfied with both the price and the terms being offered, selling prior to auction can be a smart, strategic and well-informed decision.

You are, of course, well within your rights to sell your property prior to auction, should the right offer come along.

OUR APPROACH

ABOUT THE AUCTION GROUP

The Auction Group was founded to bring more than two decades of Sunshine Coast auction experience together under one roof — a trusted, results-driven auction business built to deliver for both buyers and sellers.

We are specialists, not generalists. Auctioneering is all we do, and we do it across every category of property on the Coast — houses, units and commercial — selling each and every week from North Brisbane to Gympie, and throughout Queensland when we are called upon.

That focus shows in the numbers. We conduct roughly one in every three auctions on the Sunshine Coast and call close to 800 auctions a year. It is a rare vantage point, and it gives us a genuinely up-to-the-minute read on where buyer sentiment sits today — not a market report from last quarter, but a real sense of the market right now.

EST.2004

SUNSHINE COAST

~15,000

AUCTIONS CALLED

20+ YRS

DEDICATED EXPERIENCE

1 IN 3

AUCTIONS ON THE COAST

~800

AUCTIONS A YEAR

\$27.5M

HIGHEST SALE TO DATE

FIRST CALL FOR SELLERS

OUR APPROACH

THE WAY WE WORK

We work on a fee-for-service basis. Unlike many auctioneers, we hold no financial interest in whether a property sells on the day — which keeps our advice honest and our role genuinely consultative. Our job is to create an open, transparent environment where the right buyers can compete with confidence, and to keep pushing for our sellers long after the reserve has been met. It is a craft we care deeply about, and after twenty years we are more passionate about it than ever.



FIRST CALL FOR SELLERS

LETS TALK

READY TO START THE CONVERSATION

Whether you're leaning toward auction or still weighing your options, the best place to start is a conversation. Reach out for a discreet, no-pressure discussion about your property and your goals

The Auction Group
theauctiongroup.com.au

THE --- AG



gordon@theauctiongroup.com.au



www.theauctiongroup.com.au



Gordon 0428 370 413