PIA BUYER PATHWAYS

First Home Buyer Guide

A calm, step-by-step path from finance preparation to the first 90 days in your home.

CONTENT CHECKED 27 JULY 2026

General education only. Always confirm current rules and obtain finance, legal, tax and inspection advice for your circumstances.

START HERE

How to use this guide

Use the nine checkpoints in order. The highlighted 'Move on when' statement is the gate before progressing. Your personal circumstances, lender and contract can change the result, so keep your broker and purchase-jurisdiction legal adviser involved.

FINANCE-FIRST STANDARD

PIA treats a current pre-approval through Tactical Finance as the required checkpoint before an active property search. It is conditional, property-specific final approval is still required, and it is not a legal requirement.

SPEAK WITH TACTICAL FINANCE

https://tacticalfinanceaus.smartonline.com.au/

AUSTRALIA

National assistance to discuss

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT 5% DEPOSIT SCHEME

Eligible first-home buyers may buy with a minimum 5% deposit through a participating lender; eligible single parents or legal guardians may qualify from 2%. Price caps and other rules apply, and lender approval is still required.

Official source

https://firsthomebuyers.gov.au/australian-government-5-percent-deposit-scheme

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HELP TO BUY

A shared-equity pathway for eligible buyers with at least a 2% deposit. The Australian Government may contribute up to 30% of an existing home or 40% of a new home, subject to income, property and ongoing obligations.

Official source

https://firsthomebuyers.gov.au/australian-government-help-buy-scheme

FIRST HOME SUPER SAVER SCHEME

Eligible voluntary super contributions can be released for a first home, subject to annual and total limits and an ATO determination. Start with the ATO process before signing a contract.

Official source

https://www.ato.gov.au/individuals-and-families/super-for-individuals-and-families/super/withdrawing-and-using-your-super/early-access-to-super/first-home-super-saver-scheme

01 | PREPARE

Set the goal and clean up the numbers

Before viewing homes, decide what a safe purchase looks like for your life-not simply the maximum a lender may approve.

WHAT TO DO

+ Write down your preferred areas, non-negotiables, likely holding period and a realistic move-in date.
+ Build a complete monthly budget including repayments, council rates, strata, insurance, utilities, maintenance and a cash buffer.
+ Collect payslips, tax returns, bank statements, identification, savings evidence and details of every debt, credit limit and ongoing commitment.
+ Avoid new credit applications, buy-now-pay-later accounts and unexplained large transfers while finance is being assessed.

WHO TO INVOLVE

+ Mortgage broker
+ Accountant or financial adviser when personal tax or structure advice is needed

WATCH FOR

! Budgeting from a lender maximum

! Forgetting strata and ownership costs

! Using every dollar for the deposit

MOVE ON WHEN

You know your comfortable repayment, have a deposit/expenses buffer and can explain your financial position.

02 | FINANCE FIRST

Obtain a current finance pre-approval

PIA treats pre-approval through Tactical Finance as the required checkpoint before an active property search. It is conditional-not a guarantee of final approval.

WHAT TO DO

+ Ask Tactical Finance to assess borrowing capacity, deposit options, government schemes, lender policy and a repayment buffer.
+ Confirm the pre-approval amount, expiry date, conditions, acceptable property types and locations, and what changes must be reported.
+ Keep purchase costs outside the deposit calculation unless your broker confirms otherwise.
+ Do not make an unconditional offer merely because pre-approval exists; the lender must still approve the property and complete final checks.

WHO TO INVOLVE

+ Tactical Finance Australia - mortgage brokerage
+ Participating lender where a government guarantee/shared-equity scheme is used

WATCH FOR

! Online calculators presented as approval

! Pre-approval expiring mid-search

! Changing jobs, debts or spending without telling the broker

MOVE ON WHEN

A written, current pre-approval and maximum purchase-cost plan are on file before inspections begin.

03 | BUILD THE TEAM

Appoint independent professionals early

The selling agent represents the seller. Your legal adviser, inspectors and finance adviser should act for you and be ready before an offer is signed.

WHAT TO DO

+ Appoint a solicitor or licensed conveyancer who practises in the state or territory where you are buying.
+ Identify an independent building inspector and, where relevant, a pest inspector, strata-record inspector or structural engineer.
+ Ask for scope, fee, insurance/licence details, turnaround time and any referral relationship in writing.
+ Send the draft contract and property documents to your legal adviser before bidding or signing whenever possible.

WHO TO INVOLVE

+ State/territory solicitor or licensed conveyancer
+ Licensed/appropriately qualified building and pest professionals
+ Strata-record inspector for strata/community title

WATCH FOR

! Relying only on an agent-recommended provider

! A cheap inspection with exclusions you have not read

! Signing before legal review in a no-cooling-off situation

MOVE ON WHEN

Your legal and inspection team can respond within the timeframes likely in your target market.

04 | SEARCH

Search inside the approved brief

Compare homes against the same written checklist so urgency and presentation do not quietly change your budget or priorities.

WHAT TO DO

+ Confirm recent comparable sales, transport, services, planning activity, hazards and likely ongoing ownership costs.
+ Inspect at different times and test the commute, noise, parking, mobile coverage and street conditions.
+ For units or townhouses, obtain strata/community records, budgets, insurance, maintenance plans, defects and special levies.
+ Keep a simple pass/hold/reject record and never increase the ceiling without rechecking finance and total costs.

WHO TO INVOLVE

+ Mortgage broker for property-policy questions
+ Buyer's agent if independently appointed
+ Local council/planning authority where needed

WATCH FOR

! Underquoting or emotional escalation

! Cosmetic renovation hiding defects

! A property type the lender will not accept

MOVE ON WHEN

The property fits the written brief, finance policy and total-cost ceiling before an offer is prepared.

05 | VERIFY

Complete property and legal due diligence

Inspections and searches should be tailored to the property, title and local hazards-not treated as a generic tick-box exercise.

WHAT TO DO

+ Have the contract, title, easements, covenants, planning information and disclosure documents reviewed by your legal adviser.
+ Complete building and pest inspections before becoming unconditional wherever the sale method permits.
+ Check flood, bushfire, cyclone, coastal, contamination, mine-subsidence or heritage risk relevant to the location.
+ Obtain an insurance quote before the contract becomes unconditional; unavailable or unaffordable cover can affect finance and ownership costs.
+ Arrange specialist review for cracking, moisture, pools, retaining walls, unapproved structures, solar/electrical or other flagged items.

WHO TO INVOLVE

+ Solicitor/conveyancer
+ Building and pest professionals
+ Specialist engineer/trade when flagged
+ Insurer

WATCH FOR

! Inspection exclusions
! Unapproved additions
! Uninsured hazards
! Assuming a cooling-off period replaces proper due diligence

MOVE ON WHEN

Material defects, legal restrictions, insurance and estimated rectification costs are understood before the contract is unconditional.

06 | OFFER OR AUCTION

Set price, conditions and authority before acting

The contract-not a conversation with the agent-controls your rights. Auction purchases are commonly unconditional with no cooling-off period.

WHAT TO DO

+ Set a walk-away price from evidence and total costs, not the advertised range.
+ Have your legal adviser approve the contract and any finance, inspection, settlement or special conditions before signing.
+ Confirm deposit amount, payment method and identity/payment instructions through a separately verified channel.
+ For auction, finish finance, legal, strata and physical due diligence before bidding and never bid beyond written authority.

WHO TO INVOLVE

+ Solicitor/conveyancer
+ Tactical Finance
+ Buyer's agent or auction bidder if used

WATCH FOR

! Waiving protections for speed

! Verbal promises absent from the contract

! Changed bank details or deposit-redirection scams

MOVE ON WHEN

Your price and contract conditions are approved in writing before you sign or bid.

07 | FORMAL APPROVAL

Move from conditional approval to unconditional finance

Your broker coordinates the lender's valuation and final assessment. Do not assume the finance condition is satisfied until your legal adviser confirms the required notice.

WHAT TO DO

+ Send the signed contract and requested documents to Tactical Finance immediately.
+ Respond promptly to lender conditions and do not take new debt, move funds unexpectedly or change employment without advice.
+ Review the loan offer, rates, fees, repayments, offset/redraw and fixed/variable features before acceptance.
+ Ask your broker and legal adviser to coordinate the finance-condition deadline and any extension request.

WHO TO INVOLVE

+ Tactical Finance
+ Lender
+ Solicitor/conveyancer

WATCH FOR

! Valuation below price

! Missing a finance deadline

! Confusing loan documents with settlement completion

MOVE ON WHEN

Formal approval and loan documents are complete, and your legal adviser confirms the contract position.

08 | SETTLEMENT

Prepare funds, insurance and the final inspection

Your legal adviser and lender complete the transfer, but you still need to confirm funds, documents, property condition and cover.

WHAT TO DO

+ Confirm the settlement statement, duty/concessions, adjustments, funds required and verified payment instructions.
+ Arrange insurance from the date advised by your legal adviser and lender; risk timing differs by jurisdiction and contract.
+ Complete a final inspection close to settlement and compare the condition, inclusions and agreed repairs with the contract.
+ Do not send money using details from an unverified email. Call a known number to confirm any payment change.

WHO TO INVOLVE

+ Solicitor/conveyancer
+ Tactical Finance and lender
+ Insurer
+ Building professional if a defect must be rechecked

WATCH FOR

! Settlement shortfall

! Email payment fraud

! Unresolved damage or missing inclusions

! Assuming keys are available before settlement confirms

MOVE ON WHEN

Funds, insurance, final inspection and legal settlement requirements are confirmed.

09 | FIRST 90 DAYS

Protect the home and keep the plan healthy

After settlement, keep evidence, complete urgent maintenance and preserve the cash buffer rather than rushing into cosmetic work.

WHAT TO DO

+ Save the contract, settlement statement, loan documents, inspection reports, warranties and insurance schedule securely.
+ Update address, utilities and emergency contacts; change locks/security codes where appropriate.
+ Prioritise safety, moisture, electrical, pest and structural items identified in reports.
+ Review repayments and offset habits with Tactical Finance before the pre-approval assumptions are forgotten, and schedule an annual loan review.
+ Track and satisfy every grant, duty-concession and owner-occupation condition.

WHO TO INVOLVE

+ Tactical Finance for annual review
+ Insurer
+ Relevant trades
+ Accountant where required

WATCH FOR

! Breaching residence conditions

! Using the emergency buffer immediately

! Ignoring inspection recommendations

> **MOVE ON WHEN**
>
> Records, residence obligations, maintenance priorities and the first finance review are scheduled.

LOCAL RULES

State and territory guide

The following snapshots were checked against official sources on 27 July 2026. Contract date, property type, buyer history and residence plans can change eligibility. Recheck the linked source and ask your solicitor/conveyancer before signing.

PURCHASE LOCATION

NSW | New South Wales

Duty relief applies to eligible new and existing homes within published value thresholds.

ASSISTANCE SNAPSHOT

+ First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme: full transfer-duty exemption for eligible new or existing homes up to $800,000; concession above $800,000 and below $1 million.
+ For eligible vacant land, published thresholds are exemption up to $350,000 and concession above $350,000 and below $450,000.
+ For contracts from 1 July 2023, at least one eligible buyer generally must move in within 12 months and live there continuously for 12 months.

CONTRACT WARNING

Private-treaty purchases generally have a 5-business-day cooling-off period (10 business days for many off-the-plan contracts). Auction and certain same-day post-auction contracts have no cooling-off period; a signed 66W certificate can waive it. Obtain legal advice before signing or waiving.

LOCAL CHECKS

+ Flood, bushfire and mine-subsidence exposure where relevant
+ Strata report, capital works fund and defect history
+ Council planning certificate and unapproved structures

Revenue NSW - First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme

https://www.revenue.nsw.gov.au/grants-schemes/assistance-scheme

NSW Government - contracts and deposits

https://www.nsw.gov.au/housing-and-construction/buying-and-selling-property/buying-property-nsw/contracts-and-deposits

PURCHASE LOCATION

VIC | Victoria

Eligible first-home buyers may receive duty relief and a grant for qualifying new homes.

ASSISTANCE SNAPSHOT

+ First-home-buyer duty exemption generally applies to eligible homes with a dutiable value up to $600,000; a concession applies from $600,001 to $750,000.
+ The Victorian First Home Owner Grant is $10,000 for an eligible new home valued up to $750,000.
+ Residence conditions generally require at least one eligible buyer to occupy the home as their principal place of residence for 12 continuous months, starting within 12 months.

CONTRACT WARNING

Private sales generally have a 3-clear-business-day cooling-off period. Important exclusions include auctions and contracts signed within three clear business days before or after a publicly advertised auction. Cooling off can still cost $100 or 0.2% of the price, whichever is greater.

LOCAL CHECKS

+ Bushfire attack level and overlays
+ Owners-corporation certificate, minutes, defects and special levies
+ Combustible cladding and building notices where relevant

State Revenue Office Victoria - help to buy

https://sro.vic.gov.au/buying-property/help-buy-property

Consumer Affairs Victoria - planning to buy

https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing/buying-and-selling-property/buying-property/planning-to-buy-property

PURCHASE LOCATION

QLD | Queensland

Contracts from 1 May 2025 can receive broad first-home new-home duty relief.

ASSISTANCE SNAPSHOT

+ For eligible contracts from 1 May 2025, the first-home new-home concession can reduce transfer duty to nil on qualifying new or substantially renovated homes, with no published value cap for that concession.
+ The Queensland First Home Owner Grant and eligibility settings can change through the budget and legislation; confirm the current amount and commencement rules with Queensland Revenue Office before signing.
+ Occupation timing and grant conditions are separate from lender approval and should be checked for the exact transaction.

CONTRACT WARNING

Most residential contracts have a 5-business-day statutory cooling-off period, with a termination penalty of up to 0.25% of the price. Auction contracts and some auction-related sales are excluded. Conditions and deadlines must be drafted and monitored by your solicitor.

LOCAL CHECKS

+ Flood maps and insurance availability before signing
+ Cyclone/wind rating and body-corporate insurance in the north
+ Building and pest conditions drafted for the actual property

Queensland Revenue Office - first-home new-home concession

https://qro.qld.gov.au/duties/transfer-duty/concessions/homes/first-home-new-home/

Queensland legislation - Property Occupations Act

https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-2014-022

PURCHASE LOCATION

WA | Western Australia

The grant targets new homes, while first-home-owner duty thresholds depend on location and contract date.

ASSISTANCE SNAPSHOT

+ The WA First Home Owner Grant is $10,000 for an eligible new home; established homes do not qualify for this grant.
+ The First Home Owner Rate of Duty may reduce or remove duty. Thresholds differ north and south of the 26th parallel and may change through legislation, so use RevenueWA's current calculator for the contract date.
+ Eligibility, price caps and residence rules must be confirmed before relying on the concession in a purchase budget.

CONTRACT WARNING

WA has no mandatory cooling-off period for real-estate contracts. Your Offer and Acceptance becomes binding when accepted unless the contract itself provides a right to withdraw. Obtain settlement-agent or legal review and insert finance/inspection conditions before signing.

LOCAL CHECKS

+ Termite inspection and treatment history
+ Bushfire-prone area requirements and insurability
+ Title, sewer, local-government approvals and strata records

WA Government - First Home Owner Grant

https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-treasury-and-finance/first-home-owner-grant-fhog

WA Consumer Protection - buying by private sale

https://www.consumerprotection.wa.gov.au/buying-property-private-sale

PURCHASE LOCATION

SA | South Australia

Current state relief is primarily aimed at eligible new homes, off-the-plan homes and vacant land.

ASSISTANCE SNAPSHOT

+ For eligible contracts from 13 February 2025, published first-home-buyer stamp-duty relief has no property-value cap for qualifying new homes, off-the-plan apartments and vacant land.
+ The South Australian First Home Owner Grant is $15,000 for eligible new homes. Established homes are not covered by that grant.
+ Confirm the property category carefully-do not assume the new-home duty relief applies to an established dwelling.

CONTRACT WARNING

A buyer generally receives 2 clear business days to cool off after the contract is signed or the Form 1 is served, whichever is later. There is no cooling-off period at auction and other exclusions can apply.

LOCAL CHECKS

+ Form 1 accuracy, easements, encumbrances and zoning
+ Termite and salt-damp risk
+ Strata/community-title records and building compliance

RevenueSA - first-home-buyer relief

https://www.revenuesa.sa.gov.au/stamp-duty-land/first-home-buyer-relief/relief-available

SA Government - contracts and cooling off

https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/housing-and-property/buying-building-selling/selling-a-property/selling-your-home

PURCHASE LOCATION

TAS | Tasmania

The current published grant supports eligible new homes; recheck any established-home duty relief.

ASSISTANCE SNAPSHOT

+ For eligible transactions from 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027, the Tasmanian First Home Owner Grant is $20,000 for qualifying new homes.
+ Tasmania's published established-home duty exemption applied to eligible settlements up to 30 June 2026. Do not budget for it after that date unless the State Revenue Office confirms a replacement or extension.
+ Grant recipients generally must begin occupying within 12 months and live in the home continuously for at least 6 months.

CONTRACT WARNING

Do not assume a statutory cooling-off right applies to your Tasmanian contract. Have a Tasmanian solicitor or licensed conveyancer review the contract and insert finance, inspection and other protections before signing; auction purchases are unconditional and have no cooling off.

LOCAL CHECKS

+ Bushfire, landslip, coastal and flood exposure
+ Wastewater/septic and water-service status outside cities
+ Strata records and heritage/planning restrictions

State Revenue Office Tasmania - first-home eligibility

https://www.sro.tas.gov.au/first-home-owner/eligibility

Service Tasmania - find a licensed conveyancer

https://www.service.tas.gov.au/services/housing-and-property/buying-a-home/search-for-a-licensed-conveyancer/

PURCHASE LOCATION

ACT | Australian Capital Territory

From 1 July 2026, eligible buyers can access a broad Home Buyer Concession Scheme without a property-value limit.

ASSISTANCE SNAPSHOT

+ For eligible transactions from 1 July 2026, the Home Buyer Concession Scheme can provide a full duty concession for new or established homes and vacant residential land, with no property-value or income threshold.
+ Buyer-history and residence tests still apply: published rules include not having owned property in the previous 5 years and at least one eligible buyer living in the home for 12 months, beginning within 1 year.
+ Confirm all buyers' and domestic partners' circumstances with the ACT Revenue Office or your solicitor before relying on the concession.

CONTRACT WARNING

Residential contracts generally have a 5-working-day cooling-off period, but auctions, tender and some related sales are excluded. A buyer can waive or shorten the period only through the prescribed legal process. Obtain advice before signing.

LOCAL CHECKS

+ Leasehold title conditions and remaining term
+ Building, pest and compliance reports included with the contract
+ Bushfire, asbestos and unit-title records

ACT Revenue Office - Home Buyer Concession Scheme

https://www.revenue.act.gov.au/home-buyer-assistance/home-buyer-concession-scheme/about-the-home-buyer-concession-scheme

ACT legislation - sale of residential property

https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2003-40

PURCHASE LOCATION

NT | Northern Territory

HomeGrown Territory assistance strongly favours eligible new-home purchases and builds.

ASSISTANCE SNAPSHOT

+ The HomeGrown Territory Grant offers $50,000 to eligible first-home buyers for a qualifying new home or build, including certain off-the-plan and approved transportable homes.
+ The current official extension permits eligible contracts/build starts through 30 September 2027; application deadlines differ by grant.
+ There is no published price cap for the HomeGrown Territory Grant, but detailed eligibility and residence requirements still apply.

CONTRACT WARNING

The NT standard residential contract provides a 4-working-day cooling-off period in many private sales, but the result depends on how the contract is exchanged, representation and any waiver. Auctions are unconditional with no cooling off. Have an NT conveyancer or solicitor confirm the exact position.

LOCAL CHECKS

+ Cyclone rating, flood/storm-surge mapping and insurance
+ Termite management and building approvals
+ Body-corporate records, ground leases and remote-service costs

NT Government - buying or building a new home

https://nt.gov.au/property/home-owner-assistance/buy-build-new-home

NT Government - standard contract of sale

https://nt.gov.au/_media/docs/housing%2C-property-and-land/buying-and-selling-a-home/contract-of-sale.pdf

BEFORE YOU ACT

Final safety note

General education only, verified against the linked official sources on 27 July 2026. Rules, thresholds and eligibility can change and depend on contract date and personal circumstances. This is not financial, credit, legal, tax, building or investment advice. Obtain current written advice from Tactical Finance, your lender, a solicitor or licensed conveyancer in the purchase jurisdiction, the relevant revenue office and appropriately qualified inspectors before acting. Pre-approval is conditional and does not guarantee final finance.