



Trans-Tasman rising tide

A look at the trends and buyer motivations driving Australian interest in New Zealand waterfront property, with additional insights from leading agency McGrath across the Tasman.

With the NZD/AUD exchange rate delivering one of the strongest purchasing advantages Australians have seen in years, buyers are effectively securing close to a 20-percent currency discount when acquiring New Zealand property. This meaningful gap has lifted trans-Tasman enquiry, particularly for lifestyle and waterfront assets.

Bayleys is seeing this shift firsthand, with our national and international networks connecting Australian buyers to opportunities across the country. Alongside the currency advantage, New Zealand's broader buying environment continues to resonate. There is no stamp duty, and the softened market with pricing below recent peaks is creating appealing entry points for high-amenity and waterfront property.

While Australian tax residents remain subject to capital gains tax on worldwide income, the combination of favourable exchange rates, lower transactional friction and cyclical market softness is creating a rare buying window. Bayleys' extensive trans-Tasman connectivity ensures Australian clients receive clear guidance, strong market intelligence and seamless support from first enquiry through to purchase.

NEW ZEALAND LOVE AFFAIR

Bayleys national director residential, Johnny Sinclair says Australian buyers are responding to the lifestyle, value and accessibility they find in New Zealand's waterfront markets.

"They're drawn to our lower population density, the natural environment and the

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JOHNNY SINCLAIR
BAYLEYS NATIONAL DIRECTOR
RESIDENTIAL

chance to secure premium property at price points that often feel more achievable than comparable assets in major Australian waterfront markets.

"They like the world-class boating and fishing, the sense of space and the stronger connection to nature that comes with less congestion and more privacy."

Sinclair says Bayleys' strategic alliance with McGrath is unlocking buyers for property this side of the Tasman, as Australians continue their love affair with Aotearoa, particularly the South Island, with the wider Otago Lakers region striking a loud chord.

"The partnership is helping shine an even brighter light on waterfront opportunities, with McGrath's network, reach and market presence giving our assets meaningful exposure to a highly relevant Australian audience.

"It is connecting New Zealand's most compelling waterfront holdings with qualified buyers who may not have previously looked across the Tasman, and strengthening awareness of the unspoiled environments that set New Zealand apart across coastal, lake and riverside properties."

LINKS TO LIFESTYLE

The fast-growing town of Mangawhai around 90 minutes north of Auckland has seen a clear lift in trans-Tasman enquiry over the past six to 12 months, although

it still represents a modest share of total buyer activity.

Bayleys Mangawhai team leader, Stephen Owles says most enquiries are property-specific and come through website channels, with a smaller number arriving via personal referrals. Owles says several Australian buyers have referenced tightening regulatory settings at home as a catalyst for reassessing New Zealand opportunities.

"Prospective buyers are generally well-informed. Many have already researched New Zealand's purchasing rules, ownership structures and financing, although they often need guidance around council requirements, building compliance and insurance.

"Interest is strongest in coastal and waterfront property, particularly beachfront, estuary-front and elevated sea-view homes, but lifestyle blocks and quality homes close to beaches are also attracting attention."

Estimating a split of around 70 percent holiday home and lifestyle buyers, and 30 percent permanent relocation buyers, Owles says expats make up most of the permanent group.

"We are seeing more clients purchasing with the intention of placing the property into the luxury short-term rental market when they are not using it."

Mangawhai's proximity to Auckland, outstanding beaches, boating, outdoor lifestyle and premium golf courses, including Te Arai Links which features in Golf Magazine's Top 100 Courses in the World List, continues to resonate strongly with Australian buyers.

GATEWAY CITY

Australian enquiry into Auckland's waterfront market has lifted noticeably, and buyers are being very proactive, according to Bayleys executive director Auckland residential, Jen Baird.

"We are seeing focused, property-specific enquiry coming through the Bayleys website and directly to agents, with a





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BAYLEYS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AUCKLAND RESIDENTIAL

strong cohort of New Zealand expats and other Australian residents who recognise that our property system presents fewer barriers than many other markets. “People seeking luxury property in the wider Auckland market are generally looking for a waterfront element or a lifestyle component, and the value proposition created by the exchange rate is adding momentum.”

The breadth of waterfront property available across coastal areas, the harbour, lakes and the gulf islands gives buyers an expansive range of options that align with lifestyle, investment and long-term value. With Auckland being New Zealand’s biggest city and the centre of business, the strong airline connectivity with Australian centres makes it an obvious place for trans-Tasman buyers to anchor their search. “Bayleys’ sophisticated technical and AI-assisted systems ensure those buyers are being reached with precision, allowing us to put aspirational waterfront properties in front of them,” says Baird.

FRUITFUL SEARCH
The wider Bay of Plenty is seeing a noticeable lift in genuine enquiry from Australian buyers, with interest spanning Waihi Beach, Tauranga, Mount Maunganui, Papamoa, Rotorua and down to Whakatāne.

Bayleys Tauranga branch manager, Jon O’Connor says much of this enquiry is coming through online channels, and buyers are well-researched and keen to understand both specific properties and the wider market. “Waterfront remains the most sought-after category, from premium residential homes to lifestyle listings positioned along the coast and harbour edge. “Our team are getting several enquiries a week from Australian buyers, and at a recent team meeting we counted eight enquiries from Australian buyers across different listings, mainly in the top end of the market. “We’ve completed numerous sales to Australia-based buyers and expect strong enquiry to continue.” O’Connor says most are looking for holiday homes or investment opportunities, with permanent moves typically driven by expats returning home. The Bay of Plenty’s appeal is clear. The region is home to some of the country’s finest waterfront properties, whether beach, harbour or lake front, and its access to water attracts buyers from across New Zealand and the world.

SUNNY OUTLOOK
Dylan Monopoli of Bayleys Nelson-Tasman says the top of the south, including Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough, has seen a clear lift in Australian interest over the past 12 months, particularly in the waterfront lifestyle sector around Kaiteriteri Beach. He is speaking with Australian buyers weekly, with enquiry coming through long-standing client relationships, social media channels, targeted advertising, the Bayleys luxury network and the Bayleys website. “The appeal of moving here is driven by lifestyle, and buyers see our prices as highly competitive when measured against premium Australian markets, which is why we are seeing such a steady flow of genuine enquiry.

“While Australian buyers are typically well-informed about New Zealand’s buying policies, legal requirements and tax obligations, they do often need guidance on local price points and that’s the benefit of working with us as we have proven capability in the wider region.” Waterfront property sits at the top of Australian buyers’ wish lists, especially when privacy is part of the package, and many are also seeking lifestyle holdings with private access and strong views. “Around 70 percent are looking to relocate permanently, while the remainder are focused on holiday homes,” says Monopoli. “Either way, the value proposition is clear. Nelson and Marlborough offer abundant sunshine, safe and uncrowded towns, easy movement around the region, and iconic natural assets such as the Nelson Lakes, the Marlborough Sounds and Abel Tasman National Park, all of which resonate strongly with trans-Tasman buyers.”

CRUSADERS TERRITORY
The Canterbury region continues to attract strong interest from trans-Tasman buyers who want easy access to Christchurch while enjoying the charm of true waterfront living. Areas such as Sumner, Lyttelton, Diamond Harbour, Governors Bay and Puraui sit only around 30 minutes from the city, effectively functioning as an extension of Christchurch, and this is where most residential waterfront homes are found. Wider Banks Peninsula offers rural and lifestyle waterfront options, from farms to larger holdings, and Canterbury’s rivers and lakes add even more choice for buyers seeking water’s edge living. Bayleys Canterbury director country, Chris Jones says a recent campaign for Waitahuna in Governors Bay, one of Banks Peninsula’s oldest homes, highlighted the appeal of the region’s properties for Australian buyers.

“Two of our strongest parties, including the eventual buyer, were from Australia and they saw real value in Canterbury, citing changes to Australian property rules, a true desire to be in the region, and the comparative affordability they found here. “They also joked that Canterbury’s rugby strength helped their decision!” Australian buyers feel they are getting real value for money in Canterbury when they compare our waterfront and lifestyle options with anything similar across the Tasman. Jones says many quickly recognise the advantage created by the exchange rate, noting they are effectively getting a 20-percent discount with their dollar versus ours. “With the New Zealand dollar where it is, buyers see real value. It gives them confidence and reinforces Canterbury’s appeal for quality, space and lifestyle.”

CONNECTIVITY AND CONTRAST
Queenstown is seeing a noticeable uplift in enquiry from high-net-worth Australian buyers, with interest flowing through the major online portals as well as referrals from key McGrath contacts. Bayleys Queenstown salespeople Sarah McBride and Sarena Glass say this momentum is being driven by the changing tax laws in Australia, but also the contrasting lifestyle Queenstown offers compared to the large cities and coastal areas of Australia. “Buyers are arriving well-researched, but still seek guidance on the nuances of the local market, including pricing across different suburbs and the distinct character each area offers. Many are also consulting their own advisors before progressing any decisions,” says McBride. Interest is strongest in Queenstown’s most prestigious addresses, particularly prime waterfront positions and elevated homes with commanding lake and mountain views. Holiday homes dominate current enquiry, often with a long-term plan to spend more time here or eventually relocate. Many purchases are being made through family trusts, reflecting the buyer profile and the long-range intent. “Direct flights from all major east-coast Australian cities make Queenstown incredibly accessible, and the mountains and lakes offer a contrast to the landscape across the Tasman,” says Glass. “Premium golf courses, ski fields, cycle trails, a sophisticated wine region and outstanding dining across Queenstown, Arrowtown and Ayrburn all reinforce the region’s four-season appeal.” The area has matured into a true year-round destination, resonating strongly with Australian buyers who are only a short flight away and seeking a premium lifestyle they can’t easily replicate at home.



PREMIUMS REMAIN
Managing director and chief executive of McGrath Estate Agents, John McGrath says the waterfront market is navigating Australia’s broader property slowdown and whilst demand for waterfront assets and premium locations in general has continued to be strong, most values have reduced by 10-15 percent from the market peak. “Waterfront homes still hold an average 86-percent premium over comparable inland properties along the Australian east coast, while waterfront super-prestige sales increased 32 percent in the year to June 2026, according to McGrath Research,” McGrath explains. “Sydney continues to command the highest waterfront premium at 122 percent followed by the Gold Coast at 82 percent, Brisbane at 59 percent and Melbourne at 43 percent.” While higher borrowing costs and forthcoming reforms to negative gearing

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JOHN MCGRATH
MCGRATH ESTATE AGENTS
MANAGING DIRECTOR AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

and capital gains taxes are making buyers more disciplined, McGrath says there’s still tangible value seen in the waterfront market. “Buyers may take longer to commit and negotiate harder, but exceptional waterfront assets continue to benefit from a powerful combination of lifestyle, scarcity and long-term wealth preservation. “Investors are more broadly also reassessing risk-adjusted returns across property, equities and offshore opportunities. However, private waterfront buyers are often purchasing more than an investment. These properties can represent lifestyle and legacy assets, meaning decisions are not driven purely by yield.” The Bayleys-McGrath partnership is broadening the market for premium waterfront property, with McGrath saying that combining Bayleys’ New Zealand reach with McGrath’s Australian network, along with wider international connections through Knight Frank, delivers greater exposure to high-net-worth buyers and expats. “New Zealand demand for Australian waterfront property remains targeted rather than a tidal wave of enquiries. Southeast Queensland is a natural focus given the strong New Zealand connections and lifestyle appeal, whilst Sydney continues to attract buyers seeking globally recognised harbourfront property.”