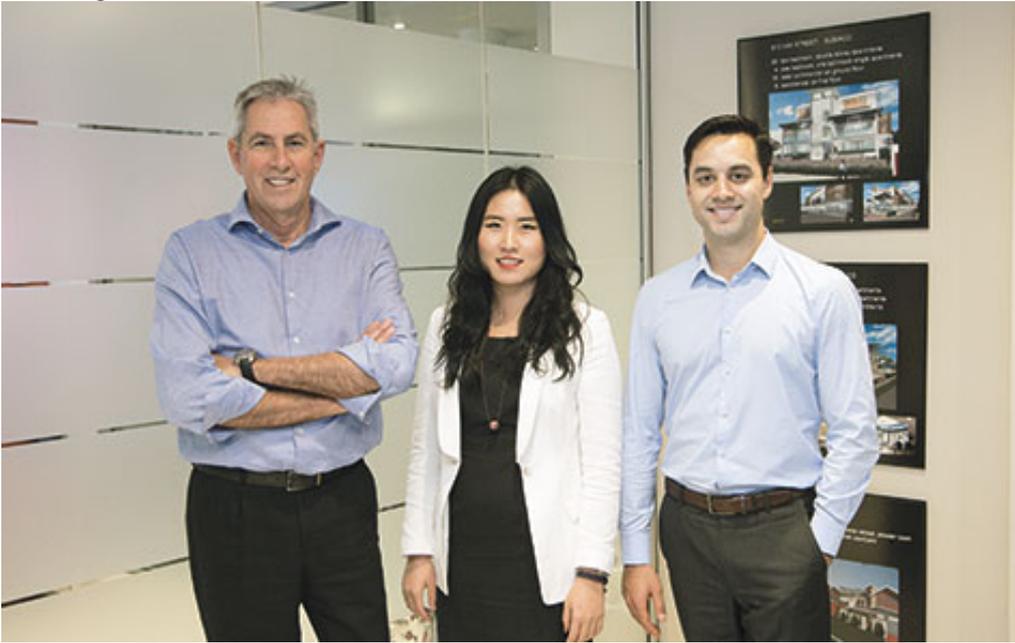


Apartments an attractive investment

Dan Wilkie
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Geared for growth: Dewwest's Tony Hatt (left) and Damon Ferguson flank international financial manager Joyce Li. *Photo: Attila Csaszar*



[1]

Property players are upping the ante to promote WA as a safe-haven investment for Chinese.

Western Australia is increasingly on the radar of Chinese property investors, with commercial agents and developers hoping to replicate the success of their Sydney and Melbourne counterparts in sourcing significant capital from this cashed-up cohort.

Urban infill development specialist Dewwest considers itself as somewhat of a trailblazer in the Perth property market, having travelled to China for more than 15 years to attract investment.

That long-term strategy has been paying off, according to Dewwest executive director [Damon Ferguson](#) [2].

“Probably around 50 per cent of our capital comes from China,” Mr Ferguson told *Business News*.

“There’s definitely very strong demand for our projects from Chinese purchasers.”

Mr Ferguson said Chinese investors were typically interested in apartment projects, either as a pure investment, or as a home for their offspring studying at one of Perth's tertiary institutions.

The biggest challenge, Dewwest managing director [Tony Hatt](#) ^[3] said, was supplanting Sydney and Melbourne in the minds of Chinese investors.

"Those are the places that they know, but I think a lot more of them are becoming aware of Western Australia and the power of the WA economy," he said.

Mr Hatt said part of Dewwest's strategy was the use of comprehensive promotional material highlighting Perth's natural attributes – weather, parklands, beaches and a thriving hospitality scene.

However, Mr Hatt said building lasting relationships was the key to attract Chinese investors.

"China's not a place that you can go to tomorrow and walk out with a bag full of money," he said,

"It takes years and years of relationship building."

Mr Hatt said the company's approach didn't stop at finding appropriate property investments for Chinese clients, with Dewwest providing much more than an asset portfolio.

"There are other things we help them with, especially when they move their whole family out," Mr Hatt told *Business News*.

"We help them buy a car, buy a house, they want their kids to go to the right school, they want to know what restaurant to go to, so we help them on all of that side – it's not just the investment side.

"It's a big responsibility on that side, but that's how word of mouth goes around."

[Altegra Property Group](#) ^[4] managing director [Tony Brooks](#) ^[5] shared Mr Hatt's bullish outlook for Chinese investment in WA property assets.

Mr Brooks, who was about to board a flight to Hong Kong when contacted by *Business News*, said he expected the Chinese appetite for Perth property only to increase as word gets out regarding the strength of the WA economy.

"We're increasingly doing more transactions and attracting investment in commercial assets," he said.

"They're interested in fully-leased assets, and a combination of office-industrial, and they've also got an interest in residential to broaden their investment base."

Mr Brooks said the company's high-service business model was particularly appreciated in China.

"We tend to target high-net-worth individuals and work strategically to get

good outcomes for them,” he said.

“They like to know that they are being cared for and looked after and they’re being placed into good assets.”

Blackburne Property Group [6] managing director Paul Blackburne [7] was equally confident regarding the prospects of luring increased Chinese investment to Perth.

Mr Blackburne said about 5 per cent of the company’s apartments were being sold to Chinese buyers, and he wanted to increase that percentage to 25 per cent within two years.

The other aspect of the market is Chinese developers wanting a slice of the pie, Mr Blackburne said.

“There wouldn’t be a month that goes by without a Chinese developer coming to our office wanting to joint venture,” he said.

“These are big billion dollar companies, not hundred million dollar companies.

“Big Chinese developers understand that the Perth apartment market is a good place to be.”

Category: Property [8]
Special Reports [9]

Tags:

DevWest [10]

Altegra Property Group [4]

Blackburne Property Group [6]

Damon Ferguson [2]

Tony Hatt [3]

Tony Brooks [5]

Paul Blackburne [7]

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Links:

[1] <http://www.businessnews.com.au/print/article/Apartments-an-attractive-investment>

[2] <http://www.businessnews.com.au/Person/Damon-Ferguson>

[3] <http://www.businessnews.com.au/Person/Tony-Hatt>

[4] <http://www.businessnews.com.au/Company/Altegra-Property-Group>

[5] <http://www.businessnews.com.au/Person/Tony-Brooks>

[6] <http://www.businessnews.com.au/Company/Blackburne-Property-Group>

[7] <http://www.businessnews.com.au/Person/Paul-Blackburne>

[8] <http://www.businessnews.com.au/Category/Property>

[9] <http://www.businessnews.com.au/Category/Special-Reports>

[10] <http://www.businessnews.com.au/Company/DevWest>