

# LJ Hooker Real Estate News

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## Q1 2026 | Quarterly Review

Sales activity for the March quarter showed a decrease in the number of house and unit sales but an increase in median prices.

The number of house sales for the quarter fell from 104 to 84 and the number of units from 74 to 35. The median price increased from \$495,000 to \$507,000 for houses and from \$287,500 to \$335,000 for units.

The top end of the market was relatively active with four sales over \$900,000, three of which were in Desert Springs and one in Araluen.

Gillen proved to be the most popular suburb for houses with 22 sales during the quarter whereas Desert Springs and Mount Johns proved the most popular for unit buyers with 7 sales

There were 3 significant industrial sales during the quarter with a property in George Crecent selling for \$1,000,000, a property in Brown Street for \$1,000,000 and a property in Smith Street for \$1,560,000.

### RBA Increases Official Cash Rates

On March 17 2026 the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) increased the cash rate by 25 bases points to 4.10%. Driven by resurging inflation and rising fuel prices due to the Middle East conflict, the second consecutive hike aims to combat stubbornly high inflation. Further rate hikes are expected in 2026. While the majority of RBA members voted to raise the rates, some members favored holding, concerned about potential impacts on consumption and economic growth. Economists and financial markets are pricing in additional rate rises to bring the cash rate higher, possibly exceeding 4.5% if inflation persists.

The big 4 banks have passed on the hike, increasing variable mortgage rates and lifting fixed rates.

### Residential and Commercial Rental Market

The residential rental market has tightened significantly over the past 12 months to the point where the vacancy rate currently sits at less than 1%. The anticipated Melanka development was expected to provide some relief, but with that project no longer proceeding, pressure on rental supply is likely to persist.

Sales activity has increased significantly over the past 12 months with house sales numbers increasing by 27.5% and units by 25.6%, however median prices have not increased by the same amount. This can be attributed to the fact that the number of properties currently on the market has remained static. In April 2025 there were 254 properties on the market and in April 2026 this number had reduced only slightly to 232. This means that when supply and demand are in equilibrium prices do not tend to move upwards.

With the median house and unit prices remaining static, coupled with an increase in rents due to the lack of supply, rental yields have become very attractive, particularly to interstate investors. We have seen a significant number of sales in the lower price brackets to investors acting on behalf of self managed super fund clients who are taking advantage of these attractive returns.

So where does all this leave us?

We have a market where:

- Sales are steady
- Rentals are under pressure
- The cost of living due to increased interest rates and fuel prices is rising
- Growth is likely to be gradual until demand outstrips supply

This does not indicate a property boom, but it is not a downturn either. It is a steady evolving market.

What is also interesting is that 19% of all sales last year were to migrant buyers. This indicates that Alice Springs is becoming more diverse, more multi-cultural and that will continue to shape the market moving forward.

The commercial rental market is also experiencing some challenges with prospective retail tenants looking to move away from the CBD due to the high rents and the increasing cost of recoverable outgoings such as council rates and insurance. Landlords who are prepared to be flexible with their rents are having success in attracting tenants to their properties.

# Sales Statistics Q4

March Quarter 2026

Suburb	Median House Price Dec 2025 quarter	No. Sales	Median House Price Mar 2026 quarter	No. Sales	% Change	Median Unit Price Dec 2025 quarter	No. Sales	Median Unit Price Mar 2026 quarter	No. Sales	% Change
Araluen	612,500	12	500,000	9	-18.3	500,000	7	460,000	7	-8.0
Braitling & Stuart	442,500	18	485,000	7	+9.6	257,500	4	379,000	3	+47.1
Desert Springs & Mount Johns	750,000	8	810,000	8	+8.0	265,500	10	343,000	7	+29.1
East Side	537,500	12	665,000	13	+23.7	395,000	11	355,000	5	-10.1
Gillen	446,000	19	469,500	22	+5.26	320,000	9	320,000	6	0
Kilgariff & South Edge	765,003	2	670,000	1	Insufficient Data	377,500	1	0	0	Insufficient Data
Larapinta	440,000	7	380,000	13	-13.6	250,000	4	0	0	Insufficient Data
Rural	850,000	10	920,000	3	+8.23	N/A	0	N/A	0	Insufficient Data
Sadadeen	432,000	8	525,000	5	+21.5	280,000	9	300,000	2	Insufficient Data
The Gap	386,000	8	500,000	3	+29.5	275,000	19	240,000	5	-12.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>495,000</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>507,000</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>+2.4</b>	<b>287,500</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>335,000</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>+16.5</b>

## Median House Price and Sales Numbers since 2020

Year ending June	Median Price \$	Number of Sales	% change per annum
2020	465,000	260	-1.06
2021	480,000	339	+3.23
2022	520,500	385	+8.44
2023	550,000	252	+5.67
2024	520,000	239	-5.45
2025	512,500	280	-1.44

## Median Unit Price and Sales Numbers since 2020

Year ending June	Median Price \$	Number of Sales	% change per annum
2020	327,000	119	+5.48
2021	335,000	167	+2.45
2022	320,000	201	-4.48
2023	340,000	156	+6.25
2024	315,000	135	-7.35
2025	279,500	162	-11.27



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# Anti-Money Laundering (AML) in Australia

Australia, like many countries, faces ongoing risks from money laundering and financial crime. It's estimated that billions of dollars are laundered through Australian businesses each year, often linked to serious offences such as fraud and drug trafficking.

To help combat this, Australia introduced the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006 (AML/CTF Act), regulated by AUSTRAC.

Banks, financial institutions and many other sectors have been operating under the legislation for some time and real estate agents will be captured under the legislation from 1 July 2026.

All real estate agents in Australia will have legal obligations to comply with the AML/CFT legislation and will be requesting more documents and information than they have in the past.

## Proving your identity

From 1 July 2026 Real Estate agents will, among other things, be required to verify the identity of their clients in accordance with AML/CFT legislation. This is called Customer Due Diligence (CDD).

This means they are required to identify who their clients are (i.e. who they are acting for). This could be individuals, companies, trusts, or other client types like societies and government departments etc. This means asking for information to verify your full name, date of birth, and residential address. This can be done in several ways but, not unlike the banks, they will ask to see identity documents like your Passport, Driver Licence, utility bill etc. In some cases, they have obligations to establish source of funds and wealth.

If your real estate agent cannot verify your identity in line with the legislation, they will not be able to act for you.

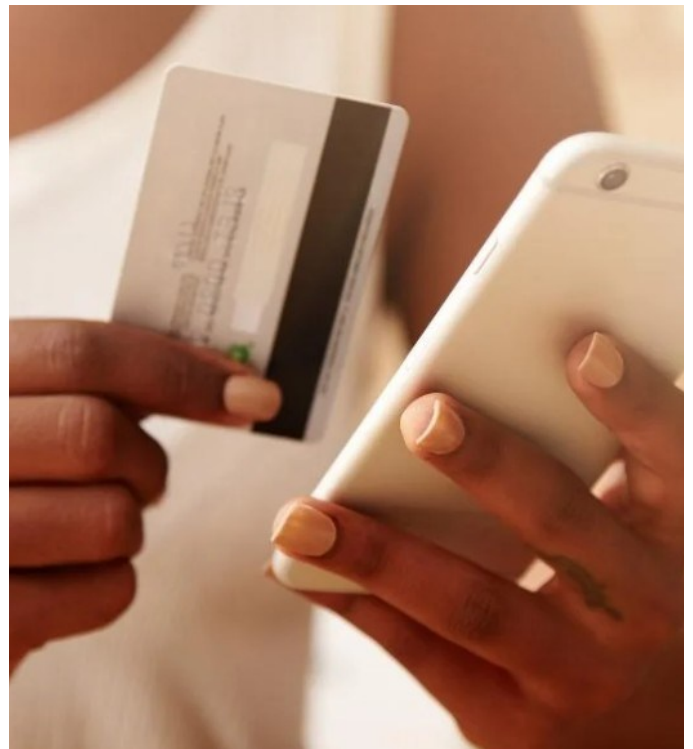
Identity verification can take days and sometimes weeks if a Trust or company is involved, or where parties reside overseas.

The below gives an indication of some of the documents your real estate agent may ask you to present in person or as a certified document as part of the process.

## What information will you need to provide?

The information you are asked to provide will vary depending on whether you are doing business as an individual or part of a partnership, company, public body, estate or trust.

As a starting point, the following identity information must be obtained:



- The person's full name
- The person's date of birth
- If the person is not the client, the person's relationship to the client

## Documentation you may be asked for

Passport or Australian Driver license, along with Medicare card and another document such as a bank statement or statement issued by a Government agency. You will also need to provide a document with your residential address (for example, a utility bill).

For Trusts and Companies, additional information prescribed by regulations must be obtained

### Trusts

The Trust Deed and, for all trustees and settlors, identity information as above, together with information regarding the Trust's source of funds or wealth. Additional information may also be required for beneficiaries and appointers.

### Companies

Details of the company, together with the information for individuals noted above for every individual with more than a 25% shareholding, all individuals with effective control of the company and all individuals acting on behalf of the company. Information regarding source of funds or wealth may also be required.

The above list is not exhaustive and is indicative only. Your real estate agent will assist you with the specific requirements in relation to your situation.

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# To Renovate or Not to Renovate When Selling

Do you renovate before you sell, or just put it on the market as is? The answer isn't a simple yes or no, but a maybe. There are many things to consider before being able to make a call. So how to know if you should put in the time, effort and dollars into renovating before selling?

## Must-do home improvements when selling

Before considering any significant spending, focus on the essentials. A well-presented home can dramatically influence buyer perception and final sale price.

Make sure you:

- Deep clean the entire property
- Repair obvious defects like leaks or broken fittings
- Apply fresh paint where needed
- Declutter and remove personal items
- Tidy gardens and improve street appeal

These low-cost improvements often deliver the strongest return.

## Treat it as a business decision

When selling, decisions should be based on return—not personal preference. Ask yourself whether any improvement will genuinely increase the sale price enough to justify the cost.

Renovating based on taste rarely adds value in the way expected. Buyers respond best to neutral, well-presented homes that align with market expectations.

## Avoid overcapitalisation and know the current market value of your property

Overcapitalisation occurs when renovation costs exceed the value they add to the property.

For example, spending \$100,000 on updates that only increase value by \$60,000 results in a direct loss.

Before committing, it's important to understand:

- What similar homes in your area are selling for
- The difference in value between renovated and unrenovated properties
- Where your home sits within the local price range

A professional appraisal can help clarify this before you spend a dollar.



## What do your potential buyers want?

Different suburbs attract different buyers. Some are looking for move-in ready homes, while others want renovation potential.

Understanding your buyer demographic helps determine whether cosmetic updates are enough—or whether more substantial work is justified.

Local agents can provide insight into what features are currently driving demand in your area.

## Keep renovations strategic

If you do choose to renovate, keep it focused and controlled. Cosmetic improvements like painting, flooring, and landscaping usually deliver the best return without overcommitting funds.

The goal is simple: improve appeal enough to attract stronger offers, not completely transform the property.

## Final thoughts

Renovating before selling can be worthwhile—but only when it's done with clear purpose and strong market understanding.

In many cases, a well-prepared, well-presented home will outperform a heavily renovated one that hasn't been aligned with buyer expectations.

If you're unsure where your property sits, a quick conversation with a local agent can help you decide what's worth doing—and what's not.

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