

# GLOBAL CITIZEN

At 28, Drew Evans has already escaped politically unstable Zimbabwe, become a world traveller, started a business and built a \$2.85 million property portfolio.

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**P**in-ups shouldn't be restricted to boy band members. There are young people in our world that are both ambitious and decent, and they should adorn the walls of aspirational youth looking for role models. A case in point is Drew Evans.

At 28, Drew has achieved as much, if not more, than many twice his age, but the road to success hasn't been a silver spoon experience.

Drew's family life began in Zimbabwe, which was a grand adventure for a time. He was at boarding school, but returned to the family farm every few weeks to live on the land.

"It was the best. I was at boarding school playing sports and hanging out with friends all day, every day. Then I was on the farm being a bloke. I grew up with tractors, motorbikes, cars, boats... it was a very, very good upbringing."

But the good times weren't to last as political instability began to see farmers forced off the land. Drew's dad was unfortunately caught up in the situation and they needed to move on.

"He owned 5,000 acres and employed a couple hundred people. He had wheat, paprika, cattle... it was a very successful farm – it was one of the first to get taken over."

So in 2001, at age 14, Drew and the family wisely made their way to Australia where they established themselves anew in Newcastle, New South Wales.

## ■ JOB LIFE

Drew's property evolution began in earnest after taking a job with a Newcastle property developer.

"At the time, I just wanted more money to go travelling again, but I was promoted through the ranks pretty quickly and became a strategist."

Drew says he could see an opportunity to work for himself and has since started a property advisory business that's rapidly expanding.

Drew continues to travel, ensuring he journeys overseas twice a year. He's realised how fortunate we are in Australia and wants to give something back too.

"I think people really struggle to see what's a first world problem and what's a real problem," he says.

Drew supports a charity called School 4 Life, which brings educational facilities to youngsters in countries throughout Africa – a doff of the hat to his Zimbabwean past.

## ■ INVESTMENT PHILOSOPHIES

So, how does this entrepreneurial free spirit approach his investing? Firstly, he likes new builds.

"I've never done a renovation... A lot of people who I speak to that have done renovations tend to say, double the time and double the cost... I think you can get the same results, if not better, through buying well and getting good quality builders that produce a project

that you're proud of that costs less than comparable property values in the area"

He also chooses to rent, rather than buy a home. This isn't surprising – a nomad like Drew is comfortably unanchored at this stage of life, freeing up capital for growth and income-producing assets.

"Rent where you want to live and invest where you can make money.

"Obviously being 28 and single, I'm trying to grow as big a portfolio as I can so that when I settle down, I can sell down some of the portfolio and pay cash for a place. My philosophy is to never have a personal mortgage."

This scheme also affords him the opportunity to live in a suburb that fires his ambition – Double Bay.

"I moved there four or five years ago... it's probably one of the best things I've done from a learning perspective. When you surround yourself with people that are successful, it rubs off. Your whole philosophy and the way you think about things changes purely as a result of the people you hang around with."

Drew has adopted a tailored investment approach in his business called the PIE principal – Population, Infrastructure and Employment.

"If the population is increasing, if there's huge amounts of money getting spent on infrastructure and if there's good employment nodes close by, then it's definitely an area worth taking a closer look at."

## DREW'S TOP TIPS

### Drew's top five tips for property investment

- 1. Don't let emotions control decisions.**  
Make decisions based on the facts and numbers.
- 2. Follow the PIE principle** on which areas to invest in.
- 3. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy.**  
Set specific goals and outcomes and formulate a strategy based on your personal objectives.
- 4. Plan for the worst** and hope for the best.
- 5. If you're sitting around waiting** for that perfect deal, you may miss out on great opportunities.



■ HITS AND MISSES

Becoming a successful investor inevitably involves failure at some stage, and it's Drew's first investment that taught him valuable lessons.

While working for the Newcastle developer, Drew came across a client who couldn't complete their purchase of an off-the-plan, three-bedroom, two-bathroom townhouse. Drew saw a chance to start his portfolio.

"Through negotiation, I used my sales commission for the property as a big chunk of my deposit. I also used the first homeowners grant with no stamp duty."

Drew says by doing this, and forward booking some income with the boss, he acquired the holding "no money down". Unfortunately the townhouse was of basic appeal and not in a growth area. Operating costs started adding up and, worst of all, Drew could see other opportunities passing him by.

"My mentor at the time said, 'Mate, sometimes you've got to know when to hold them, sometimes you've got to know when to fold them.'"

He sold the investment three years later for \$20,000 less.

Drew's first foray into development was a 2,000 square metre site in Gunnedah, New South Wales. He was looking forward to subdividing the block but a town planning limitation meant that wasn't to be.



Drew's Mudgee investment

“My philosophy is to never have a personal mortgage.”

"As it turns out the council legislation said you can't subdivide twice within a certain timeframe, and because it had been recently subdivided down to 2,000 square metres, I couldn't re-subdivide right away. I ended up strata titling a detached dual occupancy structure, that is, two four-bedroom homes."

■ GAINING WISDOM

Drew says there's plenty to learn from those that have gone before – surround yourself with smart people and breathe in knowledge. His Cameron Park project is a great example. He paid \$225,000 for the 767 square metre block and developed two detached, Torrens-titled, four-bedroom homes for a total cost of \$825,000.

Drew says the minimum freehold lot size was 400 square metres under the town plan, so he couldn't do Torrens-titled lots originally. A chat with one of his builder mentors, however, revealed a loophole.

The builder said that if you're subdividing a lot with existing structures, you can freehold down to 300 square metres.

"He said, 'Why don't you build them first then subdivide them?'... It changed the whole concept of the project.

"That was one simple conversation that made me \$100,000."

■ THE FUTURE

Drew has advanced towards more sophisticated investing and his future includes townhouse development projects.

He's also drawing on his network of contacts to secure development land off-market. Drew says large developers will have one or two sites that might suit a small duplex or triplex, for example, but they're coy about creating "investor stock" in an owner-occupier area. Drew says his track record has made him a go-to guy.

"Because I've got relationships with retail builders, I can keep the street appeal, the facade and the interest of the whole estate so it doesn't look like a poor-quality investment estate."

His other goal is to start building up the number of blue-chip holdings in his portfolio.

Drew is comfortable with words that make many sub-30-year-old men squirm. Marriage, commitment, children... but under no circumstances mention the "R" word.

"I don't think I'll ever retire. The plan is to have a completely self-sustaining property investment company... and a multimillion-dollar portfolio, which is at a very low loan-to-value ratio, if any. I'm only 28, so there's a few decades to go."

Don't worry Drew – time is on your side, mate. API



The Cameron Park construction

THE NUMBERS | DREW EVANS

SALARY RANGE: \$140K – \$160K

Location	Property description	Acquisition and settlement	Property price	Weekly rent	Current value	Current equity
Niagara Park, NSW	3-bed, 2-bath townhouse	Acquisition Dec 2009 Settlement Jan 2010	\$349,000	\$360	\$320,000 (sold)	Sold
Mudgee, NSW	4-bed, 2-bath house on 1,000sqm site	Acquisition Oct 2012 Settlement Apr 2013	\$375,000*	\$420	\$420,000	\$170,000
Gunnedah, NSW	2 strata-titled, detached, 4-bed, 2-bath homes on 2,000sqm site	Acquisition Feb 2013 Settlement Dec 2013	\$764,000*	\$960	\$880,000	\$280,000
South Brisbane, Qld	2-bed, 1-bath unit	Acquisition Apr 2014 Settlement Jun 2014	\$525,000	\$540	\$550,000	\$160,000
Cameron Park, NSW	2 Torrens-titled, 4-bed, 2-bath homes on 767sqm site	Acquisition Dec 2013 Settlement Jul 2015	\$825,000*	\$960	\$1,000,000	\$350,000
TOTAL			\$2,489,000	\$2,880	\$2,850,000	\$960,000

\* Denotes total land price plus build/development costs