



Real life

In 2002, at age 36 and heavily pregnant, Joanna Chivers had reached a crossroads. Fed up with a long-term marketing career that involved “long hours and making lots of money for others”, Joanna made a decision. “I felt time and opportunities were passing me by,” she says.

“My annual salary was about half this amount at the time and I thought, why work ridiculously long hours for two years when I can make the same amount from one property deal?”

“I wanted to set up my family’s future so we could live a great lifestyle into our retirement. Superannuation and a salaried job were just not going to do it ... [so I] made a decision to change my life, and hence my future.”

Seven months pregnant and eager to learn, Joanna enrolled herself in an intensive property investment course.

“My first investment scared the hell out of me. It was a three-bedroom unit in Narrabeen bought off-the-plan that cost twice as much as our five-bedroom house in Curl

Curl [in Sydney’s northern beaches] purchased just a few years prior,” Joanna says.

The apartment was part of a small, boutique development of only four properties, located in a flow-on

beach suburb in Sydney’s north that hadn’t yet boomed. “It was lakefront, it had beautiful water views, and everything else stacked up,” Joanna says. After researching for more than six weeks, she purchased the property for \$687,000.

In 12 months, the property had increased in value by \$150,000. “My annual salary was about half this amount at the time and I thought, why work ridiculously long hours for two years when I can make the same amount from one property deal?” Joanna explains.

Following that initial purchase, Joanna continued to invest. And now, five years later, her personal property portfolio includes six properties valued at around \$3m.

She’s also launched her own property investment business, Property Bloom, where Joanna acts as a developer and project manager, sourcing suitable properties in the Hunter Valley region on behalf of clients for redevelopment into a house plus a duplex.

Joanna guides the project from start to finish – the client can be as involved or uninvolved as they wish – resulting in three investment properties that are generally cash-flow positive, with roughly \$70,000 created in equity upon project completion. The total client investment is approximately \$550,000, with around \$100,000 of that to be accessible equity or cash, with the remainder borrowed.

“I base my fee on the profit or equity we can create in their development – so my incentive is to do everything as quickly as possible and get the best achievable result for my clients,” Joanna explains. Since its inception five years ago, the business has managed various developments, with a total value of over \$9m.

Joanna says she has the flexibility to structure her work around family commitments, which leaves plenty of time for her energetic five-year-old son, Tremayne. “It’s amazing what you can create when you’re ready for a change,” she says. “I needed to have more time for my family, and the best part is that I love what I do, and I have a more balanced lifestyle.”