

Thriving through adversity

By HEDGIE GUNDRY

Established in the 1870s, Creer Property is one of the oldest real estate agencies in New South Wales. From a small office in Newcastle's CBD to the number one residential sales and leasing agency in Charlestown, Creer Property has demonstrated incredible resilience, enjoying well-deserved success over the last 148 years.

When cabinet maker Joseph Creer's shop on Newcastle's Hunter Street burnt to the ground in 1872, he decided to pursue a new career as an auctioneer. Demand for his expert services grew, evolving into the company Creer & Berkeley when Joseph's son, Nelson Creer, and local associate and Chamber of Commerce member Hudson Berkeley joined him in business. Joseph Creer went on to become Mayor of Newcastle in 1881 and the company has been in strong hands ever since.

"There's such a connection between Creer Property and the Newcastle landscape," Brendan Walsh, Partner and Sales Manager at Creer Property, explained. "All of the main land subdivisions we see today such as Kotara, Hamilton and Mereweather were all auctioned, marketed and sold by Creer & Berkeley throughout the early 1900s."

In the late 1980s, Creer & Berkeley expanded further into residential sales and established a second office in Charlestown. Senior Partner Richard Stanton's efforts in securing the contract to sell 450 blocks of land, which is now known as the Lake Macquarie suburb of Lakelands, helped cement Creer & Berkeley's reputation as a leading

residential real estate agency in the suburbs. Knight Frank purchased the commercial business of Creer & Berkeley in Newcastle several years ago and Creer Property is now proud to honour the name of the original founder.

"Over the years, there have been several partners and changes of ownership, but there have always been strong relationships between the people who owned the company," Brendan said. "And even though our roots are heavily entrenched in the city, Creer Property is today firmly established as the residential real estate agency of choice within the suburbs south of Newcastle."

No-nonsense approach

Brendan joined Creer Property 12 years ago with a long background in real estate, having always viewed the agency as the benchmark in the area. Today Brendan and longstanding partner Craig Nealon are joint owners of the business.

According to Brendan, Creer Property's success is firmly rooted in the agency's history, traditional values and no-nonsense approach.

"What sets us apart is that we remain true to our traditional values of working hard, being respectful,



Brendan Walsh
Creer & Berkeley

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looking after each other and going above and beyond, not only for our clients but also the wider community,” he said. “We know that if we hire genuinely good people, then they are naturally going to look after our clients in the right way.

“For us, it’s important to take a very honest, transparent and upfront approach to real estate, without over complicating the process. Newcastle people gravitate towards others who are straight-up, know what they’re doing, work hard and say it how it is. And for 148 years that hasn’t changed.”

Impact of COVID-19

Like all real estate agencies across New South Wales, Creer Property has been impacted by the global Coronavirus pandemic, with the agency continuing to trade under very different circumstances.

“It’s definitely been a challenging time,” Brendan said. “Like everyone else, we’ve had to review our numbers and adapt very quickly, based on the latest health and government advice. We had to reduce our hours, put safety measures in place and restructure our environment, so our team could work from home but still service their clients.

“Our volume of sales has definitely dropped, but at this stage pricing remains steady. Thankfully for us, our rent roll continues to be exceptional.”

Maintaining team morale

During these unprecedented times, Brendan and Craig have been focused on maintaining team morale with clear communication and transparency.

“Creer Property was born out of adversity and Newcastle itself has been through periods of downturn and uncertainty over the years,” Brendan said. “Craig Nealon has been in business for almost 40 years and has traded through tough economic times before. And our Chief Financial Officer and our Accountant are both outstanding and consistently provide us with invaluable advice.

“We’re able to make sure our team are engaged by making sure

we’re in front of the curve and armed with the latest economic and market information, which we then pass on to them in a supportive and non-alarmist way. We openly discuss the measures we need to put in place to help our team educate our clients to make the best decisions at this time.”

Community

Not surprisingly, Creer Property has always been heavily involved with the local community and contributes in numerous ways, sponsoring local sporting teams, fundraising for large charities and donating to a wide range of worthy causes.

“There’s a huge community element to working at Creer Property and everyone is encouraged to play a role, large or small,” Brendan said. “Whether it’s competing in ultramarathons to raise money for Ronald McDonald House or handing out water at a kids footie game, our work has always meant more than just turning up and doing our jobs.

“We’re big on everyone doing something. It’s not about raising money all the time. It’s about showing up and taking time out to help in any way we can. We’re proud to say that this is a core part of our culture.”

The future

Despite the tough economic road ahead, Brendan remains extremely positive about the long-term outlook for Creer Property.

“We take our role as real estate agents very seriously and are fortunate to be the agent of choice for many people in our area,” he said. “A property is generally someone’s biggest asset and we need to make sure we’re fully informed to be able to offer the very best advice from our experienced team.

“We’re looking forward to upholding our standards, maintaining our history and making sure we’re always acting in a way that’s respectful to where we’ve been and where we’re going. We’ll continue to improve and build on our service offering now and into the future.” ■