

No fixed abode

● The great Australian dream of owning a home may be over, with a new report showing a dramatic rise in the number of people who now plan to never buy property.

The 2008 Genworth Financial Mortgage Trends Report, in which Retail Finance Australia surveyed about 2000 adults, shows that 16 per cent of correspondents said they never intended to buy property, up from 6 per cent in 2007.

The average age of first home buyers is also rising to an average of 30.7 between 2004 and 2008, up from 29.3 in the early 1990s.

Of those who do own property, more are concerned about servicing their mortgages, with the number expecting difficulty making their repayments in the coming year rising to 27 per cent, from 15 per cent in 2006 and 16 per cent in 2007.

Interest rates were the biggest concern, with 44 per cent saying that rate rises would have an impact on their ability to pay.

New South Wales and the ACT jointly have the lowest level of home ownership, at 53 per cent, and Western Australia has the highest level, at 72 per cent, reflecting the boom state's higher affordability level until recent years.

The Genworth report shows the average Australian adult is about \$68,900 in debt, \$58,900 of which is housing credit.

Ainslie Chandler

DELAYING TACTICS



Flex and the city

● Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick wants men to be on an equal footing with women in the pursuit of flexible work arrangements.

"It's important that we don't entrench caring as a mother's role because plenty of dads want to be involved in their young children's lives. Encouraging top-performing men into flexible work arrangements will help change these perception issues."

PricewaterhouseCoopers partner Andrew Petersen and his wife both work full-time, but Petersen says he has sufficient flexibility built into his role to be there for his son.

"Recently there was a day when my son was sick. Both of us work, so we compared schedules. I could do most of it on the phone, so I worked from home while she went to work," he says.

Petersen maintains that planning and communication, with both his family

and his team, are paramount. He also keeps clients in the loop. "I make a point of informing a client if I'm taking time out for a child's birthday, for example. And most people are very understanding of that."

Broderick is calling for more senior people, especially men, to work in flexible roles. "Flexible work arrangements are concentrated in lower-skilled roles," she says.

"We need to look at job redesign – currently we are squeezing a five-day job into three days."

Kate Burgess

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40%

Percentage of 18 to 20-year-old gen Ys with access to mobile internet

Mobility in electronic communications is spreading rapidly, a poll of Queensland gen Ys by researcher Fresh shows. The standout group switching to mobile use were those aged 18 to 20, with access to social networking sites top of the list.



Rudd a dud dub

● Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's approval rating may be riding high in the political polls, but he isn't winning any friends in the small business sector, MYOB's 2008 Small Business Survey shows.

Fifty-six per cent of small business owners believe that Rudd's contribution to the development of small business in Australia is poor, the survey found. The figure is 12 per cent higher than it was in March.

The survey shows, however, that more than 60 per cent of small business owners are not interested in reviewing the government's federal budget to assess what applies to them. Despite

their lack of the budget, 56 per cent have an impression of MYOB chi that despite small business their political the federal e

Thirty-six said they would support the Party if faced today. Twenty would favour

While 56 per cent of small business owners expect to perform 58 per cent of small business slow during

"The current approval rating while small business negative out economy in regarding performance

A new opinion poll shows that Rudd's approval rating about the same as last year's federal approval rating while opposition Nelson's trail party preference Coalition by Jane Lindie



● THEY SAID...

The services sector dominates our economy in just about every area except one – and that's exports

Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Minister Kim Carr, announcing a Co-operative Research Centre focusing on services.