Australian Agent Strategies

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Esther Yong breaks down the modern listing presentation, and why reaching international buyers is becoming a non-negotiable part of a complete strategy. Image: Supplied/Lois

When local buyer activity cools, the room for campaign error shrinks to zero.

With domestic buyer demand facing pressure from sticky interest rates, reduced borrowing capacity, and a tightening tax backdrop, including state land tax surcharges, foreign stamp duty hikes, and shifting negative gearing and capital gains settings, agents may no longer be able to rely on sheer local volume to clear stock.

Agents report that the pools of domestic capital that easily absorbed price expectations a couple of seasons ago have become far more cautious.

When domestic liquidity tightens, smart agents don’t just lower expectations; they widen the net. They start looking upstream to international capital – buyers holding foreign currency, expatriates returning home, or cross-border investors seeking safe-haven assets unaffected by local borrowing constraints.

Which brings us to the shift happening inside listing presentations. It’s not an add-on. It’s part of the campaign.

Australian real estate has been on the international buyer’s radar for decades. That’s not a trend statement – it’s a policy fact. Federal and state governments have spent more than ten years building the architecture to manage it: FIRB approval frameworks, foreign ownership registers, stamp duty surcharges, and most recently, a two-year moratorium on foreign purchases of established homes.

You don’t legislate that kind of infrastructure around something that doesn’t move markets.

None of this means international buyers are the dominant force in any suburb. They’re not. Domestic buyers drive the vast majority of transactions, and the major portals exist to serve them – which they do exceptionally well.

But a share of the buyer pool significant enough to require its own regulatory framework is also significant enough to factor into a campaign. That’s the gap most listings still have.

A structural feature, not a seasonal trend

The question isn't how many international buyers are in any given suburb; it's whether your campaign reaches them at all.

The major Australian portals were built to serve the active domestic buyer – and they do it brilliantly. Vendors know them. Buyers use them daily. They sit at the centre of every well-run campaign, and rightly so.

International buyers tend to begin their search on platforms from their own world. A French buyer might start on LeFigaro.fr's international section. A Chinese buyer already habitually browsing Fang.com – China's largest property portal – might spot a retirement home in Adelaide before ever opening a domestic Australian site. A New York buyer with a Byron Bay budget might find their dream property on Mansion Global before jumping on any local portal at all.

These aren't edge cases. They're how international property search actually begins – on familiar platforms, in familiar languages, well upstream of where most campaigns start.

My own platform's data shows that most Chinese-speaking buyers first encounter a listing through WeChat before they ever click through to the portal itself. Discovery happens in layers. A listing that isn't there doesn't lose to a competitor. It simply doesn't exist for that buyer at all.

What's quietly been added

The evolution of a strong campaign package has been gradual. Cinematic property video moved from premium to expected. Targeted social advertising – paid, audience-specific, not just organic posts – followed faster than most agents anticipated.

More recently, short-form video – platform-native clips built for Instagram Reels and social feeds – has added something cinematic video doesn't: the ability to reach buyers who aren't actively searching yet, who encounter a property while passively scrolling before they've even decided they're looking.

Each of these additions followed the same arc: optional, then differentiating, then assumed. Their absence is now what gets noticed.

Broader buyer channel coverage – reaching the portion of the market that doesn't find property through domestic portals – is on that same curve. Inconsistently adopted. Not yet universal. But moving.

The presentation shift

What distinguishes the agents handling this well isn't the specific channels they've added. It's that the conversation doesn't happen as a line item.

Agencies at the top end of the market moved on this early. Marshall White is a good example of how this thinking has evolved. For their team, broader buyer coverage isn't a proposal item a vendor opts into; it's part of how a campaign is structured from the start.

"It's already built into how we structure campaigns," says Theo Bakas, Head of Technology and Marketing Operations at Marshall White. "We see it as part of presenting a complete marketing strategy."

That framing is the shift. Not a channel added to a proposal – a different baseline for what complete looks like. Vendors aren't asked to weigh up an extra. They're shown a strategy that already accounts for the full picture. The difference in how that lands in a listing presentation is significant.

How it tends to come up

The agents who handle this most naturally tend not to introduce it as a separate conversation. What's more common is a broader opening – a read of the likely buyer profile for that property, who's active in that suburb, at that price point, and through which channels.

International buyer coverage surfaces as part of that picture rather than as an additional service being presented for consideration.

The language that tends to work is descriptive rather than explanatory:

“For a property in this market, we’d expect interest from buyers who aren’t finding listings through the usual Australian platforms – so the campaign is built to reach them directly.”

No cost justification. Just an accurate description of how the campaign works. Vendors who hadn’t thought to ask don’t push back. Vendors who were already curious feel like they’re in good hands.

What completeness looks like now

Winning a listing still comes down to the agent – market knowledge, pricing conviction, the ability to earn a vendor’s trust under pressure. No marketing package compensates for an agent who can’t hold that conversation.

The best campaigns in the world don’t win listings. Agents do.

But for agents who already have those qualities, the completeness of the campaign is what removes the last doubt. It’s hard to choose between two confident, credible agents. It’s considerably easier when one of them has clearly thought about every buyer who might be interested in this property – and the other hasn’t.

A campaign that only reaches domestic buyers isn’t a bad campaign. It’s just a smaller one.