

MPA

MORTGAGE PROFESSIONAL AUSTRALIA

MPAMAGAZINE.COM.AU
ISSUE 18.11



DREAM MAKERS

Revealing 2018's Top 100 Brokers
and what it takes to write record loan volumes

HUY TRUONG

Talking to clients
about preparing
Plan B

AMA WINNERS

Highlights of the
17th Australian
Mortgage Awards

SME STRATEGY

How to grow your
income stream and
retain more clients



TOP 100 BROKERS



Becoming more efficient, productive and customer-centric is the key to success in a tightening credit environment. Total figures may have dropped this year, but the Top 100 tell *MPA* editor Otiena Ellwand that they're still optimistic about the future

WHILE VALUE and volume have become 'bad words' in the broking industry of late, they still count for something. There are a lot of insights to gain just by tallying the figures and analysing the data, which is one of the many reasons we have continued with the Top 100 listing. The numbers tell us things that words can't always do.

Not only is it an important way of recognising and learning from the accomplishments of some of the most productive and efficient brokers in the market, but it also gives us a better understanding of how the industry's top participants are handling the latest onslaught of challenges. And if the top are feeling the pinch, then imagine how those at the bottom are doing.

This year's figures have dropped across the board, which proves what brokers have been telling us: as lending gets tighter, their jobs get tougher. They're putting in more hours and more money per file to get the deal across the line. At the same time, the increased compliance demands have forced them to become more streamlined, consistent and thorough, which will produce better customer outcomes.

Despite the current environment, these brokers know they're still doing well in the grand scheme of things. Many of them have the advantage of years of experience, knowledge and connections, so they don't have to worry about pounding the pavement and knocking on doors like their younger or newer counterparts must do.

While numbers are an important indicator of progress and success, they will never show us the whole picture. Many brokers have pointed out that regional brokers have no chance of making it into the Top 100 despite how successful they are, because their loan sizes will never match those of a broker working in Sydney. That's a fair comment, and something we need to work out how to accommodate.

To those reading the interviews on the following pages, it will quickly become clear that, while the numbers these brokers are pumping out may not be attainable for everyone, they are in many ways just the same as the average broker: they want to help their customers achieve their goals and realise their dreams.

Here's how they did it.



\$9.34bn

Combined settlement totals
of the Top 100 brokers



\$323,534,150

Total value of residential loans
written by 2018's No. 1 broker

MESSAGE FROM OUR SPONSOR

At Suncorp, we're for brokers and we are proud to support the MPA Top 100 Brokers, recognising our highest achievers in the industry. Our partnership approach provides brokers with the support of a residential BDM, small business BDM and phone-based BDM. Our sponsorship and support for the 2018 MPA Top 100 Brokers list is an extension of our commitment.

I would like to congratulate the brokers who've made it onto this year's Top 100 list, as well as the brokers and aggregators who participated. We sincerely acknowledge the role you play in helping customers achieve a better today.

Congratulations to this year's No. 1 Broker, Justin Doobov, who achieved this rank for the second year running. Justin achieved \$323,534,150 in residential loans over the year. This is a remarkable achievement and testament to his hard work, dedication and commitment to his customers.

This year's Top 100 have demonstrated commitment, service and support to deliver the best outcomes for their customers. This is an important forum to recognise their hard work and professionalism. We are proud to support them – and all brokers – for the greater access and choice they provide customers.

Mark Vilo

Head of bank
intermediaries,
Suncorp Group



TOP 100 BROKERS

100-75

#99 TECH-SAVVY
BROKING

Confidence Finance director Redom Syed has made his second appearance on the Top 100 list, and for good reason. The innovative young broker recently launched MoneyBRAINS, a free online tool that provides instant insight and analysis into one's household finances and risk position.

"Today's marketplace is characterised by high levels of household debt, a stock of interest-only loans that are due to mature inside the next three years, and relatively poor levels of financial literacy standards," Syed says.

"MoneyBRAINS is 'robo-advice' designed to help educate users about their debts and what level of risk their households' finances are actually in."

#80 FAST-FOOD FOCUS



AUSUN Finance property portfolio manager Thomas Tang applies an unusual

strategy to broking: "I treat my business like McDonald's. I break down each small step of the loan application, and systemise the process. Then, lastly, I develop its efficiency and accuracy."

Tang has used this technique to train casual staff and free up hours of his time to focus on the customer, business development and policy research.

The technique seems to be working, allowing Tang to crack the Top 100 list for the first time.

MPA TOP 100
BROKERS: 100-75

Rank	Name	Company	State	Total value of residential loans FY2017/18	Total number of residential loans FY2017/18
100	Xavier Quenon	Go Mortgage	QLD	\$63,821,987.00	172
99	Redom Syed	Confidence Finance	NSW	\$64,557,229.00	213
98	Whitlam Malkoun	Aussie	VIC	\$64,615,917.38	143
97	Fane Levy	Shore Financial	NSW	\$64,943,300.00	85
96	Sandeep Boob	RateOne Home Loans	VIC	\$65,108,947.00	191
95	Ron Lloyd	Aussie Toukley	NSW	\$65,134,873.46	156
94	Aden Williams	Alert Finance	NSW	\$65,900,000.00	109
93	Robert Callander	Aussie Morayfield	QLD	\$66,103,520.42	192
92	Michael Xia	Mortgage Channel	NSW	\$66,146,898.00	238
91	Nobel Khan	Aussie Blacktown	NSW	\$66,461,589.25	111
90	Peter Febbo	Aussie Carlton	VIC	\$66,465,441.48	120
89	Anthony McDonald	Port Finance Group	VIC	\$66,600,000.00	98
88	Peter Corta	Aussie	QLD	\$66,612,988.61	164
87	Nicholas Jones	Aussie Belmont	NSW	\$67,021,117.88	154
86	Mario Borg	Mario Borg Strategic Finance	VIC	\$67,052,435.00	114
85	Rod Peirce	Aussie	VIC	\$67,293,561.23	128
84	Graeme Holm	Infinity Group Finance	NSW	\$67,793,334.00	153
83	Toby Edmunds	Loan Market (Razor Finance Australia)	VIC	\$67,804,242.00	128
82	Tim Leonard	Mortgage Choice	VIC	\$67,824,388.00	139
81	Doreen Lehmann	Loan Market (Synergy Financial Partners)	VIC	\$67,848,860.55	186
80	Thomas Jiyun Tang	AUSUN Finance	VIC	\$68,000,000.00	100
79	Angelika Darbinian	Aussie Crows Nest	NSW	\$68,068,507.97	67
78	Ian Simpson	Smartline	NSW	\$68,207,150.00	120
77	Joshua Carleton	SMS Finance	QLD	\$68,554,702.00	201
76	Jason Cuerele	Loan Market (Mortgage Innovations)	QLD	\$68,819,634.74	184
75	Kapil Nepal	Maya Finance	NSW	\$68,937,195.00	237

WHAT ARE SOME OF BROKERS' BIGGEST CHALLENGES?



Josh Bartlett:
"There are huge challenges in the industry with the banks tightening. It is giving brokers a huge opportunity to step up, work harder for great customer outcomes, and find great solutions."



Andrew Mirams:
"Being willing to educate clients on the new changes and also willing to say no. The market has moved, and as a profession we need to take a lead and move with it for the long-term benefit of Australian households."



Kevin Agent:
"The need to lift education and skill levels ... The ongoing change, and speed at which the compliance regime and knowledge requirements lift, will also see an exodus from the industry."

With Suncorp Home Loans a family like Sunny's can save \$47 a fortnight.

Suncorp Benefits gives your clients awesome discounts so they can pay off their home sooner.



5% off groceries.



Up to 8% off clothes.



5% off fuel.

With a Suncorp Home Loan, your clients can get Suncorp Benefits for awesome discounts on everyday purchases. They'll save on groceries, clothing, fuel and more at Australia's leading retailers. In fact, a family like Sunny's can save \$47 per fortnight, which can mean paying off their home over two years earlier.

Show them the Home Loan Savings Calculator at suncorp.com.au/mortgagebenefits



SUNCORP
Create a better today



*Source: Canstar Blue & ABS Household expenditure Survey 15/16: Couple with youngest child aged between 5-14. Loans products are provided by Suncorp-Metway Ltd ABN 66 010 831 722, Australian Credit Licence 229882 AFSL 229882 ('Suncorp Bank'). To approved applicants only. Terms, conditions, fees and charges apply and are available on request.

TOP 100 BROKERS

74-40

#48 RACKING UP PRIZES



Keith Caine and his Adelaide team have had a great year of winning deals – and competitions.

Not only did he, as an individual, make it onto this year's Top 100, but his Mortgage Choice Glenelg franchise came in fourth in the MPA Top 10 Brokerages contest, with the largest loan book, \$1.1bn, among its rivals. He chalks up his success to longevity in the market and excellent customer service.

#58 A LOCAL GIANT



It was a big year of change for Leon Spadavecchia, who merged his SA brokerage

with Angelo Benedetti's last October to form Financia. Bringing together expertise, a vibrant team and their databases of thousands of contacts has given this new brokerage a wider footprint in the Kent Town region. The group has been able to grow its broker numbers and add a financial planning arm as well as a corps of support staff.

#57 SERVICING THE FAR NORTH



It may be harder for regional brokers to make it onto the Top 100, but it's not impossible, as Janine

Ashmore's stellar performance in Darwin and Palmerston shows. Making her debut in the Top 100, this Aussie franchisee is also the only NT broker on our list. Talking to the MFAA, she said consistency, community, marketing and referrals have helped her succeed.

MPA TOP 100
BROKERS: 74-40

Rank	Name	Company	State	Total value of residential loans FY2017/18	Total number of residential loans FY2017/18
74	Michael O'Shea	Loan Market (Green Financial Services Group)	QLD	\$69,357,826.61	141
73	Paul Hixon	Loan Market (W4 Financial)	QLD	\$69,909,922.51	117
72	Andrew Algie	Addisons Advisory Group	NSW	\$70,608,863.00	206
71	Balpreet Bal	Loan Market (WA Prime Finance Solutions)	WA	\$70,710,998.77	188
70	Jordan Chantry	Trinity Finance Group	VIC	\$70,830,000.00	176
69	James Henwood-White	eSelect Finance	VIC	\$71,279,308.00	104
68	John Lucci	Loan Market (J L Financial Solutions)	VIC	\$71,673,971.67	114
67	Nathan Taddeo	Credo Financial Group	VIC	\$71,770,458.00	189
66	Alycia Inglis	Stoneturn	NSW	\$72,908,408.00	171
65	Anthony O'Flynn	IFA Mortgages & Finance	NSW	\$72,965,110.00	251
64	Brett Wadelton	MY EXPERT	VIC	\$73,007,056.00	308
63	Peter Goldberg	Pinnacle Capital	NSW	\$73,038,862.00	128
62	Alex Ralec	Aussie Mona Vale	NSW	\$73,481,427.62	112
61	John Kennedy	Mortgage Choice	QLD	\$73,557,056.00	246
60	Trevor Ryan	Aussie Coolom	QLD	\$74,099,985.00	212
59	David Steere	Summit Finance Group	VIC	\$75,316,768.00	93
58	Leon Spadavecchia	Financia	SA	\$75,525,333.00	143
57	Janine Ashmore	Aussie Darwin	NT	\$76,172,909.22	211
56	Clinton Waters	Axton Finance	VIC	\$76,297,502.00	91
55	Charlie Loveridge	Shore Financial	NSW	\$76,578,322.00	91
54	Sam Carrello	Napoleon Finance	WA	\$76,781,291.00	171
53	Fabio De Castro	Oxygen Home Loans	NSW	\$77,752,596.00	143
52	Josh Gilbert	Loan Market (Smart Choice Loans)	VIC	\$77,825,341.21	129
51	Shareek Mohammed	Aussie Liverpool	NSW	\$78,017,699.69	146
50	Natasha Choi	The Australian Lending & Investment Centre	VIC	\$78,348,110.00	280
49	Kelly Cameron	Get Real Finance	QLD	\$78,489,960.00	269
48	Keith Caine	Mortgage Choice Glenelg	SA	\$78,636,839.00	270
47	Jacky Gu	Broker Partners Limited	NSW	\$79,541,083.00	181
46	Kathy Morris	SmartLend Mortgage Broking	VIC	\$80,215,000.00	231
45	Deanna Ezzy	More Than Mortgages	ACT	\$80,244,854.00	235
44	Alistair Baker	Aussie Moonee Ponds	VIC	\$81,395,692.94	138
43	Joshua Durrant	Choice Capital	VIC	\$82,093,815.00	136
42	Anthony Knight	Mortgage Choice, Erina	NSW	\$82,736,066.00	173
41	Peter V Gwynne	Financing Property	QLD	\$84,173,046.00	259
40	Sze Chuah	MLS Finance	NSW	\$84,431,104.00	269

WHERE THE POWER LIES

Despite Sydney home values dropping by more than 6% over the last 12 months, according to CoreLogic data, brokers in NSW still dominated in this year's competition.

But Victorian brokers are not far behind. While home values dropped by 4% here, the Top 100 saw a 54% increase in finalists from the Garden State. The number of brokers from Queensland and SA remained stable, while WA's representation continued to slide, perhaps reflecting the impact of its weaker market.

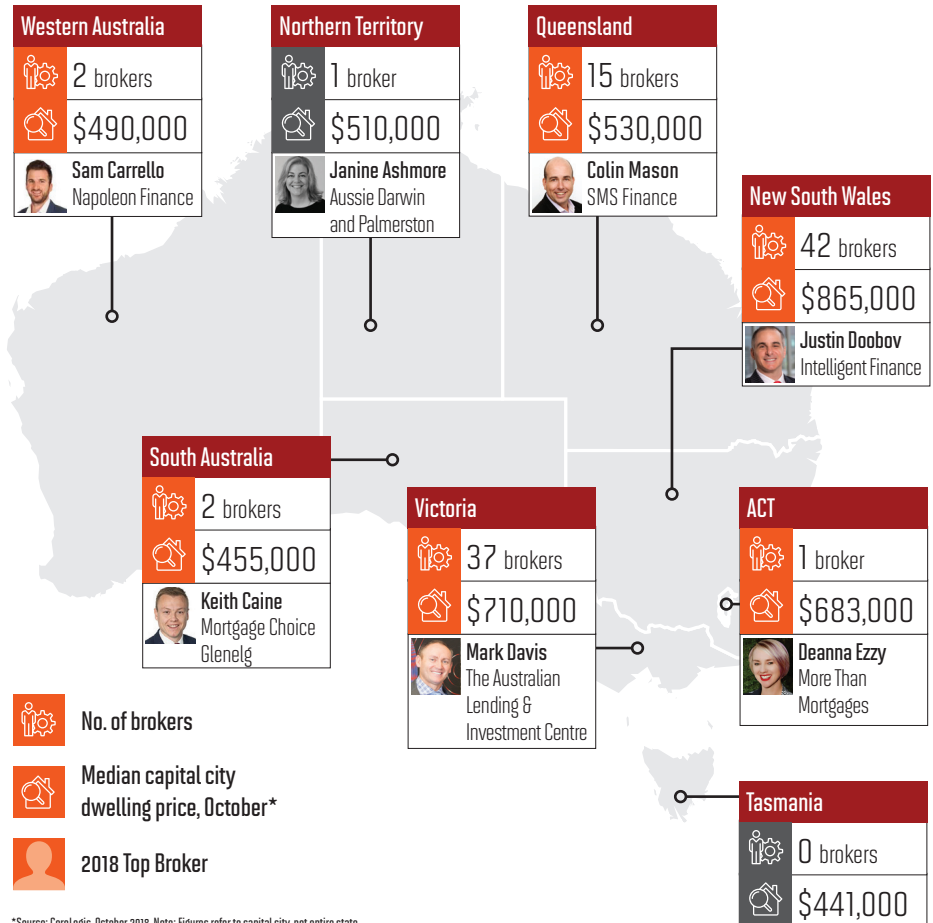
This year did see the addition of a female broker from the NT, a welcome surprise after zero representation for the past two years.

Unfortunately, Tasmania remains the missing piece. For the third year the state put forward no Top 100 brokers, despite having one of the strongest housing markets in the country, with values up 8% in the last year, reports CoreLogic.

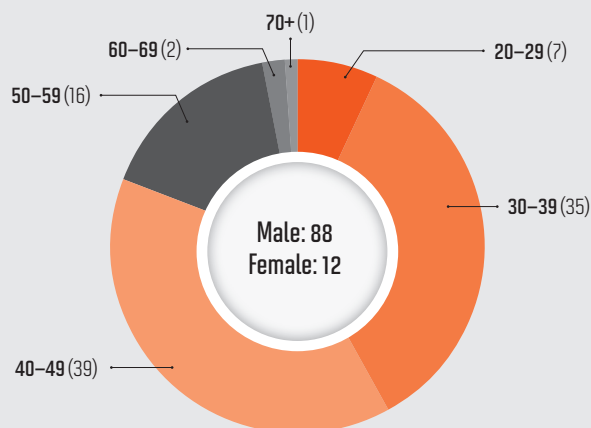
As conditions tighten, the broking industry could see some contraction in the year ahead, especially if commission changes are introduced.

"Fewer active buyers has led to higher inventory levels and reduced competition in the market. [This has] been compounded by affordability challenges, reduced foreign investment and a rise in housing supply," said CoreLogic's head of research, Tim Lawless.

Brokers who don't have efficient and productive structures in place, and a strong pipeline of referrals, might be most at risk.



AGE AND GENDER OF TOP 100



AGGREGATORS IN TOP 100

LARGEST FRANCHISES

Aussie

18

Loan Market

14

Mortgage Choice

9

LARGEST WHOLESALE AGGREGATORS

Connective

19

AFG

12

Choice Aggregation Services

9

TOP 100 BROKERS

39-11

#38 SHARING TURF WITH THE TOP



By combining his mortgage broking and financial planning qualifications, new Top 100 entrant Daniel Pym has found success in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs. In 2017, his firm was a finalist for best brokerage of the year at the Australian Mortgage Awards. Pym may share turf with this year's No. 1 broker, but he's carved out his own niche.

#36 DREAM CATCHER



Geelong-based broker Sarah Thomson has always helped people capture their dreams. Before becoming a broker, she was a wedding photographer. She fell into finance after responding to a classified ad in a newspaper. Now she's one of the most successful brokers in the Loan Market network. "I think photography and finance are probably similar because you're dealing with really important moments in people's lives," she says.

#32 CONSTANT COMMUNICATION



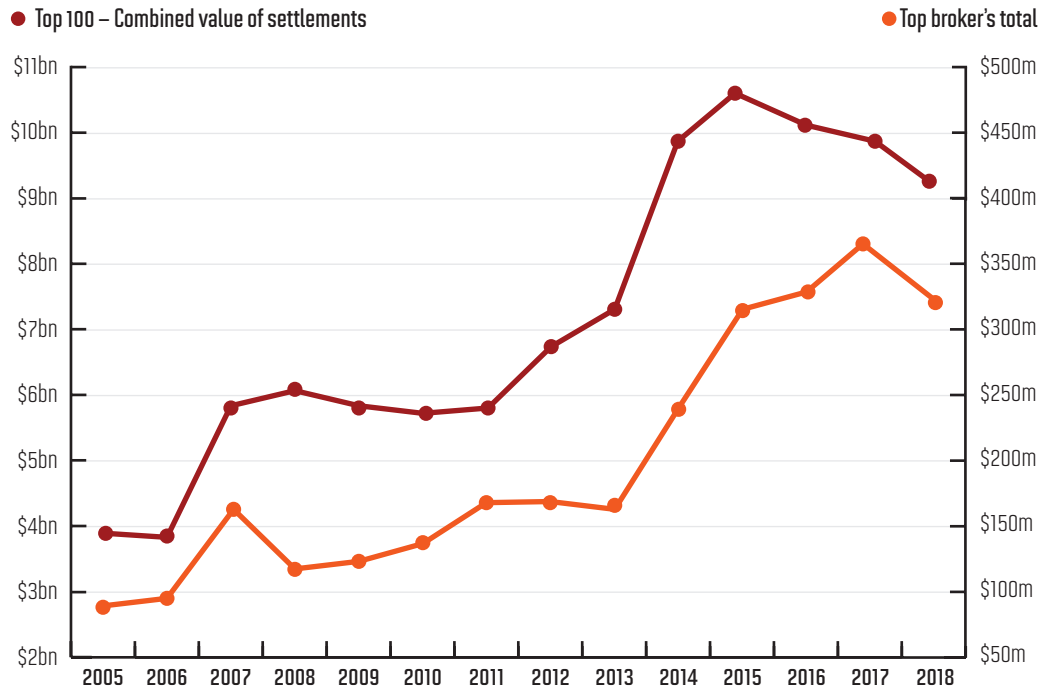
A broker since 2002, Paul Wright knows how important it is to strive for growth and embrace opportunities for change. Last year he did just that by launching a new MoneyQuest franchise in Wollongong. "I always work on a yearly target, and I increase it by a minimum of 10% each year," he says. His team remains in constant contact, communicating with every client and prospect at least 17 times a year.

MPA TOP 100 BROKERS: 39-11

Rank	Name	Company	State	Total value of residential loans FY2017/18	Total number of residential loans FY2017/18
39	Luke Torossian	Aussie Engadine	NSW	\$84,844,382.31	133
38	Daniel Pym	Loan Market Double Bay	NSW	\$84,861,802.97	92
37	Jarred Spurr	Sphere Finance	NSW	\$85,485,991.00	193
36	Sarah Thomson	Loan Market Geelong (Thomson & Co)	VIC	\$85,524,751.29	228
35	Hannah Nguyen	Loan Market (HAH Finance Solutions)	VIC	\$86,159,105.33	195
34	Jordan Beh	Insight Property Finance	NSW	\$87,822,027.00	167
33	George Tzilantonis	Aussie Berwick	VIC	\$88,241,331.33	203
32	Paul Wright	MoneyQuest Wollongong	NSW	\$91,399,721.00	379
31	Karen Bashford	South Coast Business & Financial Solutions	NSW	\$91,409,268.00	829
30	Marvin Coleman	Mortgage Choice Oakleigh	VIC	\$91,470,095.00	222
29	Nathan Aird	Universal Mortgage Experts	NSW	\$92,107,642.00	253
28	Stephen McClatchie	Loans Australia	VIC	\$94,084,167.00	166
27	Matt Cunliffe	Mortgage Choice in Brisbane City	QLD	\$95,822,641.00	253
26	Josh Egan	Astute Melbourne City South/Gippsland	VIC	\$95,854,834.00	233
25	Mark Stevenson	Bell Partners Finance	NSW	\$96,440,935.00	181
24	Chris Crook	Aussie Shellharbour	NSW	\$100,637,990.91	180
23	Raymond Teh	Mortgage Choice	NSW	\$111,299,160.00	277
22	Ruan Burger	TIME Home Loans	QLD	\$111,728,690.00	239
21	Daniel Zarkovic	Loan Market (Utopia Planitia)	NSW	\$114,707,423.00	212
20	Dr Kiran Thapa	Capkon Investments	NSW	\$115,121,241.00	406
19	Will Foster	Foster Finance	NSW	\$118,399,140.00	202
18	Peter Ellis	Century 21 Home Loans	NSW	\$120,570,297.00	146
17	David Thurmond	Mortgage Choice Berwick	VIC	\$122,000,000.00	110
16	Anthony Alabakov	My Mortgage Freedom	VIC	\$122,300,000.00	211
15	Michael Link	IMPRESS Financial Solutions	NSW	\$122,918,416.00	295
14	Vishal Gupta	Unique Finance Services	NSW	\$125,754,843.00	261
13	Daniel Hustwaite	Aqua Financial Services	VIC	\$126,186,281.00	298
12	Glenn English	Aussie Carnegie	VIC	\$127,817,029.31	260
11	Nathan Vecchio	Hunter Galloway	QLD	\$137,749,000.00	342

THE DIP CONTINUES

The value of loans written by our Top 100 Brokers fell for the third year in a row, slipping even lower than last year. The total value dropped by more than \$600m to \$9,341,845,322, the lowest level since 2014.



Productivity

MPA's Top 100 Brokers wrote 21,893 loans this year – 2,402 fewer than last year. The median broker wrote 274 loans over 12 months. This year's second-placed broker wrote the highest number of loans overall: 899.



Median total value

The total value of residential loans written by the median Top 100 broker was \$78,419,035, which was \$5.6m less than last year.



The \$300m mark

Two brokers wrote more than \$300m in residential loans over the last 12 months, which was the same as last year. Thirty-three wrote more than \$100m last year, while only 24 repeated that this year.

ANALYSIS: 2017/18 IN BROKING

Broking continues to become more difficult as this year's numbers show. For the third year, Top 100 figures took a hit across both value and number of loans written. The total value of loans written fell by more than \$600m, while the number of loans written fell by 2,402.

Interestingly, however, this year's median loan size rose by 6% to \$440,647, although there was great variation in the numbers, with two Top 100 brokers averaging over \$1m per loan, while 12 averaged below \$300,000.

Among this year's Top 10, there were three newcomers, and only three brokers who managed to increase their loan volumes from last year. The No. 1 broker's total dropped by more than \$36m, while the rest saw their totals drop by between \$8m and \$20m.

While last year's overall decline could be explained by APRA's macroprudential measures taking their toll on property investors – a crucial niche for many of the Top 100 – this year's biggest challenges have been tighter credit conditions as a result of the royal commission, and a cooling property market.

That scrutiny of the banks has been passed down to brokers in the form of anxious credit assessors who are demanding they

provide more paperwork, more proof, and more answers, sometimes to no avail. The application may still be declined, sometimes for preposterous reasons. One broker told MPA about a situation in which the bank claimed the broker was lying because a photograph from the valuation showed a swing in the applicant's backyard, which the bank took to mean the borrower had a child, which hadn't been disclosed.

To make sure these misunderstandings don't stomp the approval process, brokers continue to spend more time and money per loan application. Some of the Top 10 said they had become more ruthless about who they accepted as clients, because they needed to be sure it would be worth their time.

With the big four banks less willing to lend for a variety of reasons, brokers are looking to non-banks and smaller lenders instead. There is one silver lining to this: it's forced brokers to truly utilise the panel of lenders they have access to, reinforcing their value to borrowers. Despite the June 2018 quarter coinciding with the royal commission, brokers still settled 53.9% of all new residential home loans, the strongest June quarter yet.

TOP 100 BROKERS

WOMEN IN THE SPOTLIGHT

This year's list unfortunately saw a 25% drop in female representation compared to 2017. On the bright side, a handful of women made their Top 100 debut, including the leading lady.

Rank	Name	Company	State	Total value of residential loans FY2017/18	Total number of residential loans FY2017/18
31	Karen Bashford	South Coast Business & Financial Solutions	NSW	\$91,409,268.00	829
35	Hannah Nguyen	Loan Market (HAH Finance Solutions)	VIC	\$86,159,105.33	195
36	Sarah Thomson	Loan Market (Thomson & Co)	VIC	\$85,524,751.29	228
45	Deanna Ezzy	More Than Mortgages	ACT	\$80,244,854.00	235
46	Kathy Morris	SmartLend Mortgage Broking	VIC	\$80,215,000.00	231
49	Kelly Cameron	Get Real Finance	QLD	\$78,489,960.00	269
50	Natasha Choi	The Australian Lending & Investment Centre	VIC	\$78,348,110.00	280
57	Janine Ashmore	Aussie Darwin	NT	\$76,172,909.22	211
66	Alycia Inglis	Stonetum	NSW	\$72,908,408.00	171
70	Jordan Chantry	Trinity Finance Group	VIC	\$70,830,000.00	176
79	Angelika Darbinian	Aussie Crows Nest	NSW	\$68,068,507.97	67
81	Doreen Lehmann	Loan Market (Synergy Financial Partners)	VIC	\$67,848,860.55	186

LEADING LADIES



Not only did Karen Bashford, general manager of South Coast Business & Financial Solutions, make her debut on the Top 100 this year and rank first among the women, but she also wrote a record-worthy number of loans. At 829 home loans this past year, she's the second-highest writer by total number on the overall list. Watch out, Mark Davis!



Hannah Nguyen, director of HAH Finance Solutions, a Loan Market franchise in the suburbs of Melbourne, celebrates another Top 100 appearance this year. She made significant gains on her ranking, shooting up from 73rd in 2017 to 35th place, adding about \$10m to her total settlement figures.

10

NAVJEET SINGH MATTA

Gain Home Loans, Norwest, NSW

Aggregator: **Finsure**

Total value of residential loans FY2017/18:

\$139,957,932

Total number of residential loans FY2017/18: **342**

"I am really honoured and was really surprised that we made it to No. 10 and we were No. 19 last year, so that's a good jump," says Navjeet Singh Matta, owner of Gain Home Loans.

"There are a lot of really good brokers out there doing a wonderful job. I'm quite happy with the results."

Matta increased his total value of residential loans this past year by more than \$22m.

He says a lot of his database – 95% of whom are from the Indian subcontinent – came back this year for new purchases and refinances. Matta also worked closely with the community, sponsoring sports, religious and other local activities, which generated a lot of business for the firm.

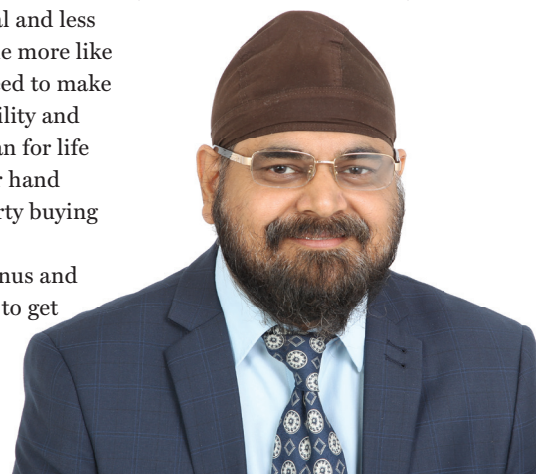
To deal with the tighter scrutiny around living expenses, Matta started hosting quarterly workshops to educate clients on why the banks were asking for more detailed information and how clients could benefit from this. He also talked to investor clients about switching to principal and interest loans from interest-only, which he said helped later on to improve their borrowing capacity.

"When we ask more questions, we can help them in a more substantial way to find them the product that really suits their needs. It was all about educating the clients and having the systems in place to ask those extra questions," he says.

He was also proactive about working closely with BDMS to stay on top of new compliance and policy requirements.

Matta, who used to run a business in India in the entertainment industry, became a broker in 2004 after attending an information session in Parramatta. Over the last 14 years, he's seen the industry become more professional and less transactional. "It's become more like financial planning; we need to make sure the client has the ability and capacity to service the loan for life and we need to hold their hand through the whole property buying process," he says.

That means that the onus and responsibility on brokers to get it right has gotten even higher. "The client is trusting you with one of the most important decisions of their life."



9

JAMES HASSELLE**Mortgage Choice,
Miami and Burleigh Heads**
Gold Coast, QldAggregator: **Mortgage Choice**
Total value of residential loans FY2017/18:
\$141,069,584
Total number of residential loans FY2017/18: **703**

In 18 years of broking, James Hasselle says this is the hardest lending environment he's ever experienced.

"The biggest challenge has been the change in lender servicing and the time it takes for the bank to go through and process an application, and sometimes they're a little bit too one-sided," he says.

Turnaround times, credit assessment and the lenders' interpretation of their own policies have all been affected, and sometimes even the lenders realise they've gone too far. Some turnaround times for the bigger lenders have blown out to between seven and nine days, he says.

It's now more important than ever for brokers to set their clients' expectations. "We're literally saying, it's going to be a tough journey. We're still getting them approved, but expect us to potentially come back with questions."

While his team has always done a lot of client discovery, now it's about making sure that's all properly documented for lenders. They've also bolstered internal processes and started using new technology to keep in touch with clients and make sure they're booked in for their annual home loan 'health checks'. They're educating clients about what changes they need to make to prepare for positive credit reporting.

"At the moment, it's never been harder to get a loan and it's never been tougher to understand it. Just normal Aussie mum-and-dads find it hard to understand how complex it has now become, and this is where we can basically help the customer more," he says.

While all this has been going down, Hasselle has also been helping another franchisee transition into retirement. He's taken over the running of that business, expanding his footprint on the Gold Coast.

"I've done this a long time and I still enjoy it. I still love it ... and I'm passionate about what we do and how we do it, and how we can improve it and be part of financing Australia."

How to retain staff

Hasselle believes the key to this is allowing staff to have a business within a business, so it's in their interest to look after their clients so they keep coming back. That has yielded results, with generations of family loyalty and word-of-mouth referrals.



8

COLIN MASON**SMS Finance**
Maroochydore, QldAggregator: **AFG**
Total value of residential loans FY2017/18:
\$152,280,893
Total number of residential loans FY2017/18:
372

The royal commission has cast a long shadow over 2018, but that doesn't mean it's all doom and gloom for the sector.

"Like all brokers at the moment the royal commission is having its effect, with credit tightening in the banking industry. That's been a slowdown point for us, but numbers are still good. The market is still growing on the Sunshine Coast and there's plenty of activity; it's just about grabbing our market share year-on-year."

Mason has achieved this by being extra communicative with clients. "Clients are appreciative of everything that we're doing because we're really upfront about time frames from start to finish," he says.

With a team of 27 behind him, he's been able to focus on what he's best at: servicing his clients while they handle the back end. As compliance becomes more rigorous and time-consuming, having a team that can get files ready, check bank statements and prepare follow-up questions allows him to develop and nurture relationships with clients and referrals. "Otherwise you can get bogged down [in the paperwork] quite quickly, and that will affect your sales."

Over the last nine years, Mason has built a database of more than 100 real estate agent referral partners on the Sunshine Coast and beyond. He keeps up with those contacts by sending a weekly text message informing them about what's happened in the past week and what "out-of-the-box deals" he's been able to get over the line, as well as sharing other relevant tidbits of news about interest rates, ID requirements and living expenses.

"On the back of the dramas in the industry, the real estate agent is at the coalface, and they're seeing more and more of their contracts crashing because of finance being declined," he says. Showing them what a broker can do for them and their clients has generated solid business for Mason.

On work-life balance

Mason believes that once you form a pattern, it's easier to stick with it. His strategy is to turn off his phone every once in a while at night or on the weekends. "With the way technology is built these days ... you can be accessible anywhere, so you have to be committed to switching off for two or three hours and giving yourself that down time."



TOP 100 BROKERS

7

ANDREW MIRAMS

Intuitive Finance
Sandringham, Vic

Aggregator: **Connective**

Total value of residential loans FY2017/18:

\$154,264,802

Total number of residential loans FY2017/18:

338

Andrew Mirams may have dropped slightly from No. 4 last year to No. 7 this year, but he's still the top bald broker on the list, he jokingly points out.

Last year he put that up on Facebook for a bit of a laugh and got two deals out of it. "It's all about the marketing. Why be No. 7 when you can be No. 1?" he says.

"We can't take ourselves too seriously. It shows a bit of personality and humour and engages people in a different way."

But seriously, what makes Mirams proud is not where he ranks on the Top 100; it's that he's getting 100% of his deals approved in this challenging lending climate. There may be more scrutiny of the channel and loan volumes may be down, but brokers are still "getting stuff done", he says.

"It doesn't mean it's not harder to get them through; it's just I don't give up very easy. I fight hard for my clients to get the right outcome," Mirams says.

Achieving that sort of conversion rate comes from asking for a lot of information from clients up front. Mirams says he doesn't submit a loan until he's completely sure that he has all the information he needs to satisfy the lender.

He now has two brokers working with him, including his son. They each specialise in different niches, such as expats and home upgraders, self-employed and investors, and first home buyers. That way Intuitive Finance can be a generalised business with internal specialists.

This past year, Mirams has been working on getting the balance right, distributing work to his fellow brokers so he doesn't have to write it all. That allowed him time to take a seven-week holiday in Europe and regular quarterly breaks.

There's no doubt that in order to write the volumes that the Top 10 brokers do, they must work hard. But he says it's not all about the numbers.

"I enjoy working hard, but there's no point just working hard and not enjoying life; it just goes too quickly. We work to live, not live to work."

Mirams is now in a transition phase and admits that "maybe in time I won't feature in the Top 100, but hopefully I'll have some other Intuitive Finance brokers up there".



6

KEVIN AGENT

The Australian Lending & Investment Centre
Melbourne, Vic

Aggregator: **Connective**

Total value of residential loans FY2017/18:

\$159,588,749

Total number of residential loans FY2017/18:

446

Before he entered broking nine years ago, Kevin Agent was working as a banker. That gave him a unique perspective on these two distinct yet interrelated worlds, while also providing him with the skill set to compete in the modern broking environment.

"Most of us at The Australian Lending & Investment Centre are ex-bankers, so we utilise the same sort of structures and disciplines from our old lives," Agent says. "Since day one we've been process-driven, and we've moved further in that direction."

With the business expanded to 45 staff, it's clear that establishing strong support structures early on has yielded long-term results. It's an approach Agent advises young brokers starting out to adopt as well.

"One-man-band operations still need support functions behind them, but the problem is they often don't want to pay for it," Agent says. "That's fine for a while, but if the market changes it could expose them drastically. Spend the dollars and invest in resources that will help you achieve long-term growth."

This year marks Agent's third year in the Top 10, moving up from seventh place in 2017. Over the past year, he's been focused on educating clients about changes in the market and making sure they don't overcommit themselves. "The younger generation doesn't know what a recession is, and that scares me a bit. Interest rates won't stay this way forever; we will eventually have some sort of cleaning out of the economy. Our responsibility is to guide our clients responsibly."

Sometimes that involves talking a client down from a \$1m loan so they don't end up in debt for the rest of their lives. He says they need to understand the implications a change in circumstances may have.

Additional regulations and increasingly cautious banks have brought a whole new set of complications to the field.

"It's a hell of a lot harder than it was," Agent says. "Deals are much more complex, and the skill base in the banks has been diluted too, which means it's tougher to get deals through. There's a much higher rate of exceptions."

Nonetheless, Agent remains optimistic about future prospects.

"Most clients are in pretty strong positions," he says. "Investors will buy in a downward or upward market – the worst market is an indecisive market."



5

DANIEL O'BRIEN**PFS Financial Services**
Bella Vista, NSWAggregator: **PLAN Australia**

Total value of residential loans FY2017/18:

\$159,946,752

Total number of residential loans FY2017/18:

370

If there's one thing that can be said about Daniel O'Brien, it's that he's consistent. Among the brokers in the Top 10, his figures are some of the most stable. He wrote 30 fewer loans this year, but the total value was worth about \$230,000 more.

"We were always fairly thorough with what we asked clients for, so the changes didn't hit us as hard as perhaps it hit others," O'Brien says.

He and his team did make some minor tweaks to systems and processes, mainly around what documents to ask clients for and when.

"I guess we just got a bit more ruthless with the people we chose to do business with, whether it be clients, referrers or banks," he says.

"We have more work to do now, post APRA and the royal commission, so we can't waste time on unproductive relationships."

Nevertheless, O'Brien still managed to grow his business via "the simplest of methods," he says.

"Being efficient, communicating often and thoroughly with new and existing clients, having a sense of humour, telling the truth, doing what's in the clients' best interests, etc. We don't strive to be cutting edge; we just focus on doing the little things well."

At the same time, he acknowledges that experience, reputation and a good track record go a long way with lending-shy credit officers. When O'Brien explains the reasons why they should do a deal, they listen. "They listen because, in 14 years [of doing business] we have never had a fraudulent deal, we have never done the wrong thing and we have never had a mortgagee in possession. This track record means something. So when we do push for a deal to get supported, our prior track record comes into account. And so it should," he says.

That doesn't always guarantee a yes, but he believes it does give his business a better chance in this credit environment.

On working hours

O'Brien is rare among the Top 10 because he actually works a regular 35-hour week, something he says is down to his processes and very experienced team. His operations manager, Josh, has been with him for 12 years and "basically runs the show". So the team of four has ironed out the kinks and learned from their mistakes, enabling the business to run like a "Formula One race car".



4

DARREN LIU**My Home Loan**
North Sydney, NSWAggregator: **Finsure**

Total value of residential loans FY2017/18:

\$182,305,332

Total number of residential loans FY2017/18:

224

"I'm a bit in shock; I didn't expect to get to this level," Darren Liu said when he found out he'd cracked this year's Top 10.

Not only did he come in fourth behind some serious heavy-hitters, but this also marks his debut on the Top 100 list.

Liu says he thinks he got to the top because he seizes new opportunities and tries to find more ways of servicing the same client. While commercial figures don't count in the Top 100 tally, broadening one's offering generates referrals and keeps clients in the fold.

"When you give them more comprehensive service, they'll appreciate your efforts," says Liu, who's been a broker for eight years. "We take care of the customer and then the customer will appreciate that and we'll generate more business out of it."

It's now more important than ever for brokers to broaden their use of lenders so they can provide more options to their customers. That means brokers also need to be across more products and policies and should talk to lenders often to keep abreast of the changes. "Now you need to be very clear on all details. Don't make assumptions; discuss policy and deals up front to prevent dramas," he says.

To go far, brokers also need a solid team and strong branding.

"You need to be able to draw on your team; it's not an environment for a one-man band any more," he says.

The brand has also become more important as people look for brokers who are reliable and trustworthy. But he warns brokers not to expect customers to be generated from a single marketing campaign.

"It is the long-term relationships we've maintained and the education we've provided that has slowly built this up."

Liu's team have also worked on simplifying and fine-tuning their sales procedures. One of the ways they did this was by standardising their phone conversations so every employee follows the same steps to qualify customers for the second stage. This helps prevent staff from getting stuck on long-winded phone calls and ensures customers receive the same service and information.

"Time management is very important to get the business to a new level," he says.

Next year, Liu will take a step back to focus more on managing and growing his team and sourcing new opportunities.



TOP 100 BROKERS

3

JOSH BARTLETT**Financially Healthy, Loan Market Bayside**
Cheltenham, VicAggregator: **Loan Market**

Total value of residential loans:

\$203,798,651

Total value of residential loans FY2017/18:

400

Josh Bartlett was one of only three Top 10 brokers to increase their total loan values this year.

Just like last year, Bartlett added more than \$19m to his total, which he says is partly to do with being an eight-year veteran of the industry and not having to chase business. He also credits his three staff members, who have been with him for several years.

He may have lodged 85 fewer loans, but he had “much tighter processing around each client”, including which clients he met, the conversations they had and the follow-up process.

In order to stay abreast of lending changes, he and his team spent time nearly every day of the week training. “We’re obsessed with credit policy training,” he says. He also brought in a new BDM each week.

While he settled more this year than in the past, Bartlett says it’s become easier. When he sits in front of a client now, he feels like he knows them better and understands what they’re after – and it’s not just rate or product. “The client has to know you, trust you and understand the information that you’re giving them.” Brokers also need to spend more time listening to find out why their clients are actually there.

In the past, Bartlett used to see anyone who walked through the door, but he’s become more discerning now to ensure each meeting is worth it for both client and broker.

Because his team are so confident about policy and the nuances of different banks, the market changes have actually helped differentiate his business. “Last week, for example, we put in 13 loans to 13 different lenders for 13 different clients.”

Bartlett didn’t let that go to waste: he used it in marketing material that he sent to his real estate agent network. “It just goes to show the expertise that a broker brings to the table. As a broker, we’ve got choice.”

On work-life balance

Bartlett has stopped working Saturdays so he can watch his children play basketball. “It’s allowed my business to run more efficiently and helps my team not be under the pump as much,” he says. “It created too much business and too many problems.”



2

MARK DAVIS**The Australian Lending
& Investment Centre**
Melbourne, VicAggregator: **Connective**

Total value of residential loans FY2017/18:

\$300,909,867Total number of residential loans FY2017/18: **899**

Mark Davis wrote 899 loans this past year and conducted every single interview himself. How did he do it? Forty interviews per week.

In these changing times, people tend to halve their communication because they get so busy, which is the opposite of what one needs to do, Davis says. Now is the time to triple it. The ALIC team communicates with clients every three days, unless they’re told otherwise.

“Especially in this market, they want to know that everything is OK. ‘I’ve got nothing to update you on; everything is under the control.’ Because we have more sophisticated investor-type clients, they’ll be all over you like a rash if they think you’re not in control,” he says.

Not only do brokers need to up their communication, but they also need to increase their training and streamline their processes.

“We’ve made huge changes to the way we operate over the last six to 12 months because the banks are changing on a daily basis,” Davis says. “You need to increase your intensity and put more time in. I didn’t think I had any more time, until you sit down and push yourself a little bit harder.”

While training will take more time up front, it saves time in the long run, Davis says.

“You can’t afford not to train,” he says. “You don’t have time not to adhere to absolutely everything – one-on-one’s, managing meetings, updates, introduction calls, follow-up calls, updating the client every three days; it’s process, process, process.”

“You do all that and actually save time. You save time by becoming better and more efficient, by being proactive rather than reactive.”

He says it’s important to be able to sort out quickly whether there is a deal to be done or not. Many clients come to ALIC after being turned away by other providers and expect them to be able to “pull a rabbit out of a hat”.

But Davis isn’t deterred. “It is an investor market; our business model has been built for bad times, so astute investors actually operate in bad markets and make the most of their money in these times. In the next three to six months, we should be coming into some of our best times ever.”



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TOP 100 BROKERS



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Total value of residential loans
FY2017/18

\$323,534,150



Number of residential loans
FY2017/18

408

Justin Dobov is this year's top broker for a reason: when it comes to servicing clients, he says he doesn't differentiate between them.

He'll write a loan for the CEO of a public company, and that CEO's secretary. He's got first home buyers coming in to see him – albeit more of the waterfront mansion variety – and investors with 45 properties.

Dobov's business relies entirely on word of mouth from existing clients, and this in turn acts as a bit of an initial vetting process for new clients, because "like attracts like".

"Our philosophy is we look after every customer the best that we can," he says. "We offer them the best service that we can, and we know that the client will then become a raving fan."

Intelligent Finance invests nothing in conventional marketing. "We spend our time, effort and money servicing the client, and then that client becomes a moving billboard."

Regardless of who they are, they all get the same service, Dobov says. That can happen because he's invested in his staff, built the systems and has the back-end support they need. Getting the process right the first time means his administration team can eliminate time wasted going back and forth between lender and client, and ultimately lift conversion rates. Dobov is the only broker at Intelligent Finance, but he's got a team of seven in Sydney and eight in the Philippines processing applications and looking after his existing client base, which frees him up to meet new and returning clients face-to-face.

That might explain why, even in this year's tighter lending environment, Dobov was still able to write 408 loans worth \$323m.

That doesn't mean he was immune to the challenges, however. His total volume of new loans did contract by \$36m this year compared to last year, and he settled 185 fewer loans. He says it takes two to three times longer for an application to be approved than it did two years ago.

**"We spend our time,
effort and money
servicing the client, and
then that client becomes
a moving billboard"**

"There are so many extra steps and compliance hurdles that need to be met that it just adds more time, complexity and paperwork to what should be a relatively easy loan application. Most brokers are feeling that pain; even just the difference in lenders' rates and product offerings is time-consuming to sort through."

The industry's reputation has also taken a hit this year. When Dobov started as a broker 17 years ago, and established his own business working out of his parents' three-car garage, he says people used to treat

brokers like they were superheroes. "People would want to see where my cape was," he says. "We walked in there and clients were paying crazy rates directly to the banks and we were able to save them a fortune."

"Now, with the royal commission and everything else, it seems like people with

non-broker vested interests are trying to muddy the broker name and industry, when, in general, most of the broker industry only does good for clients."

Part of doing right by your customer involves servicing them beyond settlement, which is a duty Dobov takes to heart. "We say to the customer: we will manage you until that loan is paid off. Any questions, any issues, any changes or modifications you need ... call us and we'll get that solved."

It may be labour-intensive, but Dobov is an advocate of buying products with a lifetime guarantee.

"We've gotten you into the debt and we're going to help you with that debt until you've got it paid off."

On work-life balance

While Dobov is not regularly up at 3am and in bed at 11pm any more, he still works seven days a week.

"I've got a very understanding wife, and that's one of the key points. My wife understands that I've got a job to do, and I've got to service these clients. ... By me helping clients achieve their dreams, my family are able to financially achieve their dreams as well," he says. **MPA**



Justin Doobov (left)
is presented with the trophy by
Mark Vilo, head of bank
intermediaries at Suncorp

