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How to handle an estate sale

If you are reading this, then you might have just been through one of life's most emotional transitions: A death in the family. And now, you need to deal with one of life's most stressful situations: Selling a property.

It is understandable if this feels like a lot to take on. Working through the property sale process after a loved one has died can present multiple challenges:

- Emptying a house that is full of memories.
- Working with other estate beneficiaries who could be all over the world.
- Handling legal processes when you feel like doing anything but that.
- Getting the property ready to sell, especially if there is a lot of deferred maintenance involved.
- Project managing all of the above, while still running your own busy life and working through your own grief process.

I have helped many clients through this stage in life and in this article I will share some what I have gained from that experience. Feel free to call me anytime to discuss your personal situation or to ask for professional recommendations.

A good lawyer is key

Having the right legal person on your side through an estate sale is essential. If possible, look for a local who specialises in property transactions and has experience with the estate sale process. Get them

involved early so you can get a clear understanding of the timeframes involved.

Getting the property ready for sale

While you are waiting for the legal side to be sorted, you can (probably) start tackling the property itself. Ask for advice from a local real estate salesperson you trust, with details on what the property might sell for and what you can do before going on the market to maximise the result.

From there you can speak with your family and/or the executors of the estate to work out how much of that suggested preparation work you want to do before selling.

Ask for help

As a minimum, it is likely you will need to empty the property of some furniture, keepsakes and personal items. This can be the hardest part of the process, especially if you find yourself doing it all on your own.

Remember that people love being able to help but might feel nervous about intruding, so you may need to reach out for assistance. Please do so. You might be surprised by how willing others are to get involved. This process is so much easier if you have some support.

Be realistic

The property might need new carpet, new paint and a wide array of other jobs done, but that doesn't mean you need to do it all. Buyers are attracted to the unchangeable features of a home, like sun aspect, school zones, overall size and location, not just what it looks like.

Houses that need work do attract buyers who love a project. So do what you can, with the time you have and keep asking for help.

I've got local handy people who can help sort little odd jobs before going on the market. This is usually a cost-effective exercise and can add thousands to your sale price. I am happy to connect you with people who can assist you.

Document everything

When you are working through an estate sale it pays to keep detailed records of all expenses and decisions, especially if you have other family members involved in the decision-making process. Ask your chosen real estate salesperson to communicate all feedback and advice by email (as well as verbally) so you have a track record showing the reasoning behind any decisions.

Take it one day at a time

Prioritise your time each day by asking: What is the number one thing that needs to happen today to move this process along? It might be as simple as a phone call.

Extra steps for a smooth estate sale:

- Redirect mail to your own address (including local council rates).
- Talk to the insurance company covering the property.
- Meet the neighbours and make sure they have your contact info.
- Engage someone to look after the lawns until settlement of any sale.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, I am here to help.