

## Harry Perks and Malcolm Kinnaird have been heralded as 'Property Icons' by the Property Council

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Harry Perks has been inducted as a Property Council icon. Pic Mike BURTON.

PROMINENT property developer and syndicator Harry Perks has spent 25 years convincing South Australians to invest in the state, but he says his job is being made harder by the most uncompetitive tax regime in the country.

The long-time campaigner for tax reform, particularly land tax, was heralded as an icon of the property industry yesterday as part of a Property Council program launched last year.

Mr Perks and the late Malcolm Kinnaird became the third and fourth "Property Icons", joining last year's inaugural inductees Theo Maras and Gerry Karidis.

His company - PPI Funds Management - manages 22 shopping centre and office building investments across 13 syndicates and together worth more than \$600 million.

While most of the properties are located throughout South Australia, PPI's last two acquisitions - Taree City Centre and Nambour Plaza - are located on the eastern seaboard.

Mr Perks said it was becoming increasingly difficult to make projects stack up in South Australia.

"South Australia is a great state - I just wish the State Government could learn to run their business better," he said.

“With a billion dollar deficit this year, the only way you can get that down is one of two ways - you either increase taxes or you run your business better by making the tough decisions and rationalising your own business.”

“We have to do it but they just want to keep upping taxes.”

Land tax remains an ongoing bugbear for Mr Perks, who wants to see inefficient state taxes, including stamp duty and land tax, replaced with a broader and higher rate of GST.

“It’s a no brainer really,” he said.

“If you’re going to get more GST per head of population then you have to get your taxes in line with other states - that could be something the Federal Government could do to get this state to make sure it gets its taxes in line with other states.”

Mr Perks said cutting land tax would stimulate development, creating investment and much needed jobs in the sector.

“Land tax is double the rate in nearly every other state on larger subregional shopping centres,” he said.

“And it affects all people not just the wealthy - many people own rental property or a beach house so they are affected and small business owners are affected as it drives up rents.”

“We’re passionate about doing business here, we love South Australia and we want to do business here but all we’re asking for is a level playing field.”

Born and raised in Victor Harbor, where he retains large property holdings, Mr Perks initially pursued a career in accounting, establishing the Perks accounting practice with younger brother Greg in 1981.

In the late 1980s following rapid growth of the practice, Mr Perks was on the lookout for investment opportunities for himself and clients.

In 1990 he formed his first syndicate to acquire the Westland shopping centre at Whyalla, taking a substantial equity stake and using his personal home as security.

The recession of the early 1990s offered opportunities for counter-cyclical investors like Mr Perks, and in the decade after the Whyalla acquisition, he went on to syndicate centres at Naracoorte, Berri, Roxby Downs, Unley, Victor Harbor and Mount Barker and Greenacres.

“They really were the golden years,” Mr Perks said.

“I didn’t want to be in the shadow of Westfield - I’d rather be the dominant property in the area.”

“In the time since we bought a lot of those properties in the ‘90s we have spent something like \$110 million upgrading and expanding them.”

Mr Perks will take up the role of executive chairman of PPI in the new year, handing over the reins to son Lachlan who will relocate to a new Sydney office.

“All the head offices unfortunately are in Sydney - there are a lot of the opportunities we don't even see because the big boys are in Sydney,” Mr Perks said.

“The listed property trusts, the big agencies who sell a lot of these properties are in the eastern states and we often hear about things after they've been completed.”

Outside of property, Mr Perks is passionate about horseracing, having owned and bred a number of Group 1 winners including 2011 Caulfield Cup winner Southern Speed.

Property Council state executive director Daniel Gannon said Mr Perks and Mr Kinnaird had both fought hard for the property industry and for the thousands of people employed in it during their careers.

“Harry Perks and Malcolm Kinnaird have been inducted for their exceptional contribution to the South Australian property industry through sustained leadership, major pioneering contributions and an outstanding legacy to the property industry and the South Australian community,” he said.

Former South Australian of the Year Malcolm Kinnaird passed away in September following a distinguished career during which he served as chairman and director of a number of companies and government advisory boards including Adelaide Brighton, Freightlink and Macmahon Holdings.

In 1960, he founded the Kinhill engineering firm, which was acquired by KBR in 1997.

He played a leading role in the development of the original David Jones building in the CBD and the West Lakes and North Haven residential and business districts.

While chairman of Asia Pacific Transport he was a driving force behind the \$1.3 billion Adelaide to Darwin railway.