THE DEBT REDUCTION PLAYBOOK

A practical guide to paying off your home loan sooner, while still enjoying what matters most

5 proven strategies used by Ironbark Group clients to reduce debt faster, improve loan structure, and take control of their financial future

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THERE IS A FASTER WAY TO BE DEBT-FREE

For many Australians, a home loan is something that is set up once and then left to run its course over 20 or 30 years. But what many people are never shown is that the structure of your loan, not just the rate, plays a significant role in how quickly you can pay it off.

Small decisions made early, or not revisited over time, can quietly add years to your mortgage and thousands in additional interest. In today's environment, where interest rates and cost of living pressures are front of mind, these details matter more than ever. The reality is, most homeowners are not doing anything wrong. They simply have not been shown a more effective way to structure their loan.

WHAT THIS GUIDE WILL HELP YOU DO

This guide has been designed to give you a clearer understanding of how your home loan is working today, and where there may be opportunities to improve it.

Inside, you will:

- Learn the key strategies that can help reduce your loan faster
- Understand where you may be paying more interest than necessary
- Work through a simple health check of your current setup
- Build a practical action plan based on your own situation

It is a starting point, designed to help you see what may be possible with the right structure in place.

A NOTE FROM IRONBARK GROUP

At Ironbark Group, we work with clients every day who are looking to take more control of their home loan and reduce their debt sooner.

With access to over 50 lenders and more than 200 years of combined experience across our team, our focus is not just on finding a competitive rate, but on structuring your loan in a way that supports your broader financial goals over time.

WHAT YOUR HOME LOAN COULD REALLY BE COSTING YOU

When most people think about their mortgage, they focus on the interest rate. But the true cost of a home loan is not just the rate you can see. It is how that rate interacts with your balance, your repayments, and your overall structure over time.

Interest is calculated daily and compounds over the life of your loan. This means that even small inefficiencies can have a significant long-term impact.

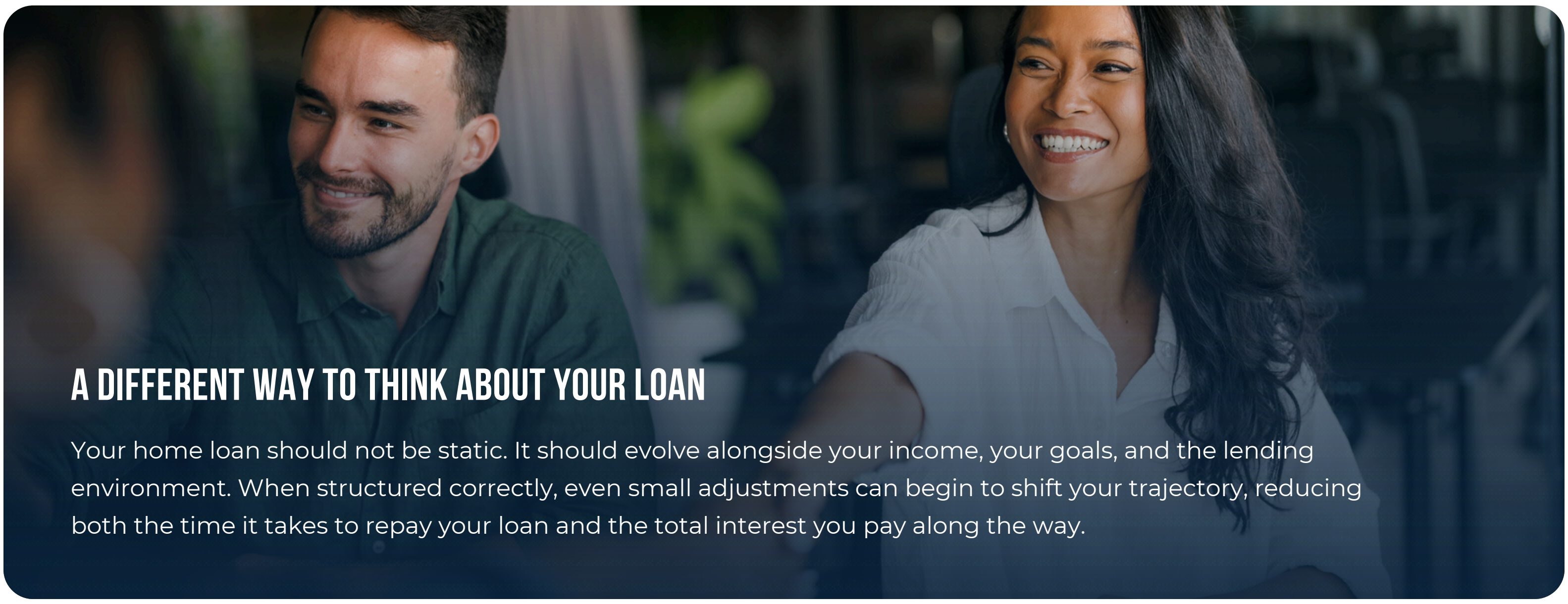
> For example, a difference of just **0.3% on a $500,000 loan** may not feel meaningful month to month, but over time, it can translate into **tens of thousands of dollars** in additional interest.

WHERE THIS OFTEN SHOWS UP

We regularly see homeowners in strong financial positions who are still:

- **01** — **Sitting on interest rates that have not been reviewed in years**
- **02** — **Holding savings outside of an offset account**
- **03** — **Making standard repayments without any strategy behind them**
- **04** — **Managing multiple debts separately rather than as part of a broader plan**

None of these are mistakes. They are simply the result of a loan being set up once and never optimised as circumstances change.



A DIFFERENT WAY TO THINK ABOUT YOUR LOAN

Your home loan should not be static. It should evolve alongside your income, your goals, and the lending environment. When structured correctly, even small adjustments can begin to shift your trajectory, reducing both the time it takes to repay your loan and the total interest you pay along the way.

THE 5 STRATEGIES THAT MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE

There is no single “silver bullet” when it comes to paying off your home loan sooner. Instead, it is the combination of a few well-chosen strategies, applied consistently over time, that delivers meaningful results. Here are the five core strategies we use with Ironbark Group clients.

1 MAKING ADDITIONAL REPAYMENTS

Every extra dollar you contribute goes directly toward reducing your loan balance. Because interest is calculated on a reducing balance, even small, consistent additional repayments can shorten your loan term and reduce the total interest paid.

2 REVIEWING YOUR RATE WITH PURPOSE

The lending market changes constantly, and lenders often reserve their most competitive rates for new customers. Regularly reviewing your loan can help ensure you are not paying more than you need to, and may open up opportunities to restructure your loan more effectively.

3 USING AN OFFSET ACCOUNT EFFECTIVELY

An offset account allows your savings to reduce the amount of interest charged on your loan. When used correctly, by directing income and savings through the account, it becomes a simple but powerful way to reduce interest without locking your money away.

4 STRUCTURING YOUR REPAYMENTS STRATEGICALLY

Small structural changes, such as switching to fortnightly repayments or consistently rounding up your repayments, can have a compounding impact over time. These adjustments are often simple to implement but can make a meaningful difference.

5 BRINGING YOUR DEBTS INTO ONE STRATEGY

If you have multiple debts, such as credit cards, personal loans, or car finance, they may be costing you more than necessary. By reviewing how these are structured alongside your home loan, it is often possible to simplify your finances and reduce overall interest.

These strategies are most effective when they are **tailored to your individual situation** and applied in the right combination.

In the next section, we will help you assess how your current setup compares.

YOUR DEBT REDUCTION HEALTH CHECK

Just like a car or a house, a home loan benefits from a regular check-up. Rates move, lender products change, and your own circumstances - income, goals, family life - shift over time too. A loan that was the right fit a few years ago may quietly no longer be pulling its weight.

This quick health check will help you identify whether your current setup is working as efficiently as it could be, or whether there may be opportunities to reduce your loan faster.

TICK THE STATEMENTS THAT APPLY TO YOU

YOUR CURRENT SETUP

- ☐ I have reviewed or negotiated my interest rate in the past 12-18 months
- ☐ I understand exactly what interest rate I am paying today
- ☐ I know how much interest I will pay over the life of my loan

HOW YOUR LOAN IS STRUCTURED

- ☐ I am using an offset account effectively (not just holding savings separately)
- ☐ My income and savings are structured to reduce interest wherever possible
- ☐ I understand whether my loan should be fixed, variable, or split

YOUR REPAYMENT STRATEGY

- ☐ I make additional repayments on a regular basis
- ☐ I have considered switching to fortnightly repayments
- ☐ I direct bonuses, tax refunds, or surplus cash into my loan

ONGOING OPTIMISATION

- ☐ I review my loan regularly rather than setting and forgetting
- ☐ I would know if a better structure or rate became available
- ☐ I have a clear plan for when I would like my loan to be paid off

HOW DID YOU GO?

10-12 TICKS

You are on the right track. Your loan is likely structured well, and you are already doing many of the right things. There may still be opportunities to fine-tune your setup and bring your timeline forward.

6-9 TICKS

There is room to optimise. Small changes to your structure or strategy could make a meaningful difference over time, particularly in the current rate environment.

0-5 TICKS

There is a strong chance you are overpaying. This is very common, and usually not the result of a wrong decision, just a lack of ongoing review. A more tailored approach could significantly reduce your interest and loan term.

WHAT THIS MEANS

If you did not tick every box, you are not alone. Most homeowners we speak to are in a similar position. Their loan was set up correctly at the time, but over time, circumstances change, rates shift, and opportunities to improve are missed.

The key is not to overhaul everything. It is to identify the few changes that will have the biggest impact. That is exactly what the next section will help you do.

ARE YOU LEAVING MONEY ON THE TABLE?

For many homeowners, the biggest cost of a mortgage is not the rate itself. It is the small inefficiencies that compound over time. These are not always obvious, and they are rarely intentional. But over the life of a loan, they can add up to years of extra repayments and tens of thousands of dollars in additional interest.

Here are some of the most common gaps we see.

YOUR RATE HAS QUIETLY DRIFTED

Many lenders offer their most competitive rates to new customers, not existing ones. If your loan has not been reviewed in the past couple of years, there is a strong chance your rate is no longer as competitive as it could be. Even a small difference can have a meaningful impact over time. On a $500,000 loan, a reduction of 0.3%-0.5% can translate into significant long-term savings.

YOUR OFFSET ACCOUNT IS UNDERUTILISED

Offset accounts are one of the simplest and most effective tools available, but they are often not used to their full potential. We frequently see:

- Savings sitting in low-interest accounts instead of offset
- Income not flowing through the offset
- Everyday cash not structured to reduce interest

When used correctly, your everyday money can quietly reduce your loan balance every single day.

YOUR REPAYMENT STRUCTURE IS WORKING AGAINST YOU

Most people default to monthly repayments because that is how loans are set up. But small structural changes, such as switching to fortnightly repayments or consistently adding a modest extra amount, can reduce both your loan term and total interest paid. These changes are simple, but their impact compounds over time.

YOUR DEBTS ARE WORKING IN ISOLATION

If you have multiple debts such as credit cards, personal loans, or car finance, you may be paying higher interest than necessary. Without a clear structure, these debts can sit alongside your mortgage rather than being managed as part of a broader strategy. In some cases, consolidating or restructuring can simplify your finances and reduce overall interest.

YOUR LOAN HAS NOT KEPT PACE WITH YOUR LIFE

Your financial position does not stand still. Income changes, expenses evolve, and goals shift over time. But many loans remain exactly as they were on day one. Without regular review, it is easy for your loan to fall out of alignment with your current situation.

WHAT THIS COULD MEAN FOR YOU

Individually, these gaps may seem small. But combined, they can quietly extend your loan term and increase the total cost of your mortgage over time. The good news is, most of these are fixable. And often, it is not about making drastic changes. It is about making the right adjustments, in the right places, at the right time.

YOUR ACTION PLAN

By now, you will have a clearer sense of where your loan may not be working as efficiently as it could be. The next step is not to change everything at once. It is to focus on a few practical actions that can start making a difference straight away. Use this page to map out your next steps.

STEP 1 SET YOUR GOAL

Having a clear target changes how you approach your loan.

I WOULD LIKE MY HOME LOAN TO BE PAID OFF BY:

____

STEP 2 CHOOSE YOUR FOCUS AREAS

Tick the actions you are ready to commit to over the next 3-6 months.

- ☐ Review and negotiate my current interest rate
- ☐ Set up or better utilise an offset account
- ☐ Increase my regular repayments by $__________
- ☐ Direct my next bonus, tax refund, or surplus cash into my loan
- ☐ Explore whether refinancing could improve my position
- ☐ Restructure my income and savings to reduce interest
- ☐ Switch to fortnightly repayments
- ☐ Review and consolidate any higher-interest debts

STEP 3 RUN YOUR NUMBERS

Even small changes can have a meaningful impact over time. Take a moment to sense-check what your chosen actions could mean:

Estimated additional repayment per month	$ __________
Potential years saved on your loan	__________ yrs
Estimated interest saved over time	$ __________

(You can use an online calculator, or speak with your Ironbark Group broker to map this out properly.)

STEP 4 KEEP IT REALISTIC

The most effective strategy is one you can maintain consistently.

Rather than overcommitting, focus on changes that fit comfortably within your current lifestyle and cash flow.

Progress, even in small increments, compounds over time.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Paying off your home loan sooner is rarely about one big decision. It is the result of a series of smaller, well-structured choices made over time. This plan is your starting point. In the next step, we can help you turn it into something more precise, using your actual numbers and a strategy tailored to you.

LET'S TURN THIS INTO A TAILORED PLAN

This guide is a starting point. It is designed to help you think differently about your home loan, identify opportunities, and take the first steps toward reducing your debt sooner. But the real value comes from understanding what this looks like for you. Because no two loans, and no two financial situations, are the same.

WHAT A CONVERSATION WITH IRONBARK GROUP LOOKS LIKE

When you speak with our team, we take the time to understand your full picture, not just your interest rate. From there, we help you:

- Understand exactly how your current loan is performing
- Identify where you may be overpaying or missing opportunities
- Model how different strategies could impact your loan over time
- Structure your lending in a way that aligns with your goals

Our brokers have access to more than 50 lenders, but more importantly, we focus on building a strategy that works for you long term.

A CLEARER VIEW OF WHAT'S POSSIBLE

Many of our clients are surprised by how much of a difference the right structure can make. In some cases, it is a matter of small adjustments. In others, it is about reshaping the loan entirely.

Either way, the outcome is the same: more clarity, more control, and a more efficient path to being debt-free.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

If you would like to understand how much faster you could pay off your home loan, we would be happy to help. Book a conversation with an Ironbark Group broker.

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