

Drought not hurting prime rural values

Larry Schlesinger

More than \$18 million worth of rural holdings in western NSW changed hands last month as investors and farmers showed a strong appetite for well-irrigated grazing properties tied to the beef and lamb sectors.

In total four out of five properties offered for auction sold, including two prior to auction, achieving a clearance rate of 80 per cent, with multiple bidders on the two properties that sold under the hammer.

"There is strong demand for high and reliable rainfall country," said David Nolan from rural specialists Webster Nolan Real Estate who marketed all five properties.

"Droughts do not have a negative impact on land values," Mr Nolan said. "In my 30 years selling farms I have seen other serious droughts and the same has always applied."

Among the successful vendors were well known Sydney yachtsman Simon Kurts and hotel investor Craig Smith.

Sydney-based Mr Kurts, the son of Peter Kurts who won the Sydney-to-Hobart race three times, sold 1028-hectare Greenhills at 965 Clements Road in Woodstock for \$4,275,000 at auction.

Mr Kurts paid \$2.2 million for Greenhills in October 2007, and ran it as a cow and calf-breeding enterprise under the management of Steve Boyd.

Mr Nolan, who marketed Greenhills

with James P Keady & Co, said there had been three registered bidders and 20 bids on the day with an opening offer of \$3.6 million. The buyer was a Sydney-based investor who owns other land in the area.

"Greenhills demonstrated the demand for farms offering scale and future productivity growth. The added bonus was the property was not over-capitalised, which is ideal for existing land owners wanting to grow their land base," he said.

Another successful vendor was Craig Smith, of the Smith Property Group, who sold Ashburton, a 181-hectare grazing and lifestyle property near Orange prior to auction.

Pre-auction expectations were between \$4 million and \$4.5 million for Ashburton at 719 Amaroo Road in Borenore, which included an architect-designed five-bedroom homestead with a swimming pool, a two-bedroom guest cottage plus cattle and sheep yards and nine dams.

Mr Smith owned the Parramatta Mercure Hotel, which he bought from Tourism Asset Holdings in 2013 for \$16 million and sold to Chinese investors in 2016 for \$33.6 million.

The two other properties that sold were 432-hectare Birubi on the Sturt Highway near Wagga Wagga and 269-hectare Lone Pine in Tarcutta, both of which were owned by Annette Tynan whose late husband Michael Tynan bred the well-known Birubi



Birubi, near Wagga Wagga, sold prior to auction for more than \$4 million. Below: Greenhills was owned by Simon Kurts.

Limousin stud. Birubi, which had pre auction indications of \$4.4million-\$4.8million, sold prior to auction to a Southern Highlands farmer. Lone Pine sold under the hammer for \$2.12 million to a farmer on the NSW-Victoria border after 17 bids with an opening bid of \$1,625,000.

Both properties are equally suited to cattle and sheep.

Mr Nolan said both Greenhills and Lone Pine were located in high and reliable rainfall districts while Ashburton and Birubi offered both an agricultural and a lifestyle component.

