

Sarkis Nassif of Holdmark is the 2017 Property Person of the Year

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Sarkis Nassif



Burwood Place by Holdmark, five towers up to 42 storeys

Sarkis Nassif the head of Holdmark Property Group is the Property Person of the year for 2017, says the Urban Taskforce.

"Sarkis Nassif left the instability of his homeland in 1987 and arrived in Australia to pursue his studies and set up a new life. Sarkis came to Australia with literally no ability to speak English," says Urban Taskforce CEO, Chris Johnson. "Within two days of arriving in Australia, Sarkis began work as a form-worker for meagre \$60 a day. He worked extremely hard to put a deposit on his first home within a year of working in Sydney."

"From those early struggling days working as a form-worker, Sarkis set about building his company Holdmark into a major property developer in Sydney where he is building thousands of new apartments."

Sarkis's first development project was in Victoria Avenue Concord West not far from where he lived and close to local shops and a train station. He saw the 'for sale' sign early one morning and purchased the site that same afternoon. In his true style of rolling up his sleeves, Sarkis was the form worker, steel fixer and civil contractor on the job.

The early days for Holdmark's development were focused in the inner west suburbs including Strathfield, Burwood, Concord and Parramatta. Sarkis grew from strength to strength, building and developing sites which ranged from 20 to 200 units. In addition, location of sites which are in key strategic areas became a key plank to the success of the business.

Apart from the long hours and dedication, as well as an eye for detail and his strong understanding of construction, he developed a real passion and skill in design and understanding of the Australian banking system. He forged strong relationships with not only professionals in the construction industry and consultants, but also with legal experts and financiers. Sarkis notes that 'integrity and honesty' when dealing with bankers particularly is a key factor to success.

In 2011, the GFC came and this was a period of real concern with many major developers facing crisis. For Sarkis, this period of risk became a period of opportunity. With strong relationships already forged with bankers, he was able to capitalise and seize on several key projects. This undoubtedly a major turning point for Holdmark.

Holdmark, under Sarkis's leadership have now moved into much larger projects including the \$2 billion urban development at Shepherds Bay with 3,000 apartments over 13 stages and 90% sold. At Majors Bay in Mortlake a \$500 million project that is half completed will have 500 apartments when finished.

Other notable projects include, Burwood Plaza, which has recently been granted in principle approval proceed with five mixed use towers containing commercial, residential, retail and hotel development up to 42 storeys high. This massive development will transform two adjoining blocks in the heart of Burwood into a new bustling mixed-use destination in Burwood.

Other projects in the pipeline include a mixed-use development in Macquarie Park with 1,400 apartments in 4 towers and 25,000 sqm of commercial space and over \$100 million of community benefits contributed by Holdmark. Demonstrating his appetite for risk taking, Sarkis has also proposed an 83-storey futuristic tower in the heart of Parramatta.

Urban Taskforce Chair Peter Daly said "Sarkis Nassif is the classic example of an immigrant arriving in Australia with nothing and working his way through hard work to becoming one of the major property developers in Sydney. Holdmark is today developer of large mixed use precincts that include thousands of apartments. Our congratulations to Sarkis for all that he has achieved and for the role model he sets for the property industry" notes Mr Daly.

Urban Taskforce CEO Chris Johnson applauded Sarkis's contribution to the broader community. "Sarkis established the John-Paul Foundation in memory of John Paul Nassif to assist families facing hardships due to illness, tragedy and adversity. This year the foundation has heavily supported Westmead Children's Hospital. He has also supported several local charities and community groups."

Sarkis is a strong family man ably supported by his wife Bernadette and three of his five children, Kevin, Kristy and Ivana, are closely involved in the Holdmark business.

Previous winners of the Urban Taskforce Property Person of the Year have included Harry Triguboff, Lang Walker, Joe Khattar, Tony Perich and Iwan Sunito. The dinner where the Property Person of the Year is awarded is a charity event where funds are raised for Warrah Homes and for St Vincent's Hospital Cancer Research. Over \$3 million has been raised for these two important charities through the Property Person of the Year program.

*The **Urban Taskforce** is a property development industry group, representing Australia's most prominent property developers and equity financiers.*

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