

FINANCIAL REVIEW

SE **Property**
HD **The \$13b beer baron eyeing up Australand**
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WC 721 words
PD 7 June 2014
SN The Australian Financial Review
SC AFNR
ED First
PG 39
LA English
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Thai bidder A self-made man is about to grab a vast portfolio of assets.

Most Australians visiting Thailand have a sip of the local brew, Chang, eye-catching with its green elephant-adorned label.

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Today the beer has more connection with Australia than ever before.

The owner of the **company** who makes Chang, Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi, is about to become Australia's richest **property** billionaire.

On Wednesday, Charoen's Singapore-based **property company**, Frasers Centrepoint Limited (FCL), made a surprise \$2.6 billion bid for the diversified Australand **Property Group**.

Frasers's all-cash \$4.48 per security offer knocked the previous scrip bid, of \$4.35 from local **property** heavyweight Stockland, out of the **park**.

Frasers already has a substantial development operation in Australia with a pipeline of 2300 apartments including Central **Park** in Sydney and Queens Riverside in Perth, as well as managing stakes in properties such as Perth's Central **Park** and Canberra's Chisholm Centre for Singapore listed real **estate** investment trusts.

Charoen has long owned the **Park** Hyatt in Canberra and what is now the Intercontinental in Adelaide.

To that portfolio he is about to add Australand's \$2.4 billion worth of office towers and logistics facilities, \$1.8 billion of **commercial** development and \$7.5 billion housing pipeline.

Charoen only gained control of Frasers last year, paying \$S13.8 billion (\$11.8 billion) in an aggressive takeover battle for the 130-year-old Singapore conglomerate, Fraser & Neave (F&N). In doing so, Charoen displaced Lee Hsien Yang, the son of Singapore's founding father, Lee Kuan Yew, as F&N's Chairman.

F&N produced much of Singapore and Malaysia's canned beverages but the real prize was the **property** operation, Frasers Centrepoint.

It has housing projects in Singapore, **China** and Australia; manages malls and **commercial property**, and operates and has interests in more than 8000 serviced apartments from Glasgow to Sydney.

Earlier this year the \$4.5 billion Frasers Centrepoint was spun out of the **group** and listed separately in Singapore with Charoen's interests holding 88 per cent.

Valued at \$US12.2 billion (\$13.15 billion) by the latest Forbes Billionaires List, the "liquor tycoon" was not always wealthy.

In a classic rags to riches story, this self-made billionaire is the sixth of 11 children of a **Chinese** immigrant mussel-pancake street vendor in Bangkok.

At the age of nine, he was already a talented entrepreneur. Later, he started supplying a government-owned whisky distillery, and managed to get a stake in the then state owned liquor production market through his business, TCC **Group**. In Bangkok, TCC **Group** owns the tech-mall Pantip Plaza in Bangkok. It also owns hotels in the US, Australia and Asia, as well as retail, **commercial** and **residential** buildings in Thailand and Singapore. Charoen's empire also spills into insurance and agribusiness.

Now 70, he is married to Khunying Wanna and has five children, most of them in the family business.

Khunying Wanna plays an influential role as vice-chairman of F&N.

One son, Panote Sirivadhanabhakdi, is also a director of F&N, and has interests in Australia companies, Tropical Almond Development, Grand Willow Development and Golden Shower Development.

His other son, Thapana Sirivadhanabhakdi is Thai Beverage's president and chief executive officer.

In 1987 the Thai Royal office gave Charoen his surname, Sirivadhanabhakdi, which means "goodness, prosperity, loyalty".

Charoen also briefly dabbled in football sponsorship, trying to **buy** Liverpool in 2004, but ended up doing a sponsorship deal with Merseyside rivals Everton.

Not happy with just being a "capitalist crony" as some may call him in Thailand, he has holds numerous honorary degrees from Thai universities.

Charoen has a collection of royal decorations including the Knight Grand Cordon (Special Class) of the Most Exalted Order of the White Elephant.

His last interview to the foreign press was to Forbes in 2005.

A local taxi driver was quoted in the Forbes article saying: "If you drink Heineken, you look so high class. It's expensive, but it tastes good. Normally I drink Singha. Chang is for the labourer. It means you have no money."

But the beer baron does, and he is about to spend it in Australia.

CO	ahlaus : Australand Property Group ceprol : Frasers Centrepoint Ltd dbsl : CapitaLand Limited
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