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# DATA ROOM

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## Unity Pacific buy favours Sentinel listing plans

Flamboyant Queensland funds manager Warren Ebert has finally managed to gain a major foothold in the Unity Pacific Group as he attempts a backdoor listing of his Sentinel Property Group.

The private company manages \$1 billion of property across Australia and would sit alongside the likes of 360 Capital Property and Garda Capital if it lists on the Australian Securities Exchange.

Sentinel yesterday boosted its 5 per cent stake in Unity Pacific Group to 13.35 per cent, putting it on track to eventually take over the vehicle. After months of stalemate, Sentinel moved swiftly to secure its position, buying about three million shares at 41c last night.

Sentinel will be a serious



**Warren Ebert**

player among the ranks of property funds managers. Mr Ebert, who frequently lashes more conservative investment houses for underperforming, has built a strong following of wealthy investors by buying unloved properties and turning them around.

Sentinel now has about \$1bn worth of assets under management including 45 retail,

industrial and office assets. It has flagged its interest in Unity Pacific for the past 12 months but it had been rebuffed as the target company called in corporate adviser InterFinancial to assess its alternatives.

Just last month Unity Pacific said it would shift its focus to selling its corporate shell after wrapping up the \$37.3 million sale of the last of its major properties in Brisbane. Mr Ebert has made no secret of his desire for control. He has long wanted to list his management company to provide himself with some liquidity and to help Sentinel advance the plans it has laid out to list its growing retail and industrial property funds.

Sentinel's model is essentially buying up assets that institutions regard as too hard to fix and then

repositioning them. The funds it assembles have performed well and the main potential candidate for listing is the growing Sentinel Countrywide Retail Trust, which would be a candidate to buy some non-core centres that Vicinity Centre is selling.

Vicinity owns a portfolio of neighbourhood shopping centres, mainly in regional Australia, and offers a higher yield than rival vehicles. Sentinel is also building up an industrial fund, using the same counter-cyclical buying strategy, and its holdings may eventually be consolidated and packaged for an ASX listing.

Sentinel has also branched into buying large format retail centres and tourism assets, with Mr Ebert determined to shake up the property sector.

## Sentinel increases Unity stake

**TAKEOVERS:** Warren Ebert's Sentinel Property Group has confirmed its desire to win control of the listed shell of Unity Pacific Group, increasing its stake in the listed property funds group to 13.35 per cent.

Sentinel had previously held talks with Unity Pacific regarding an offer to buy back all the company's securities it did not own in a move to float itself on the ASX via a backdoor listing.

But it failed to reach an agreement with the UPG board after approaches to the listed company over more than a year.

The company, which has continued to seek out a means

via which it can acquire UPG, yesterday confirmed a report in DataRoom that it had lifted its stake in Unity Pacific, strengthening its hand in deciding the company's future.

"We have maintained our focus on seeking out any available opportunities on the open market to increase our total UPG shareholding," Sentinel founder Mr Ebert said.

"Sentinel's 13.35 per cent interest in Unity Pacific means it is well placed to participate in future corporate activity in UPG as a security holder that holds a real and substantial interest in the future of UPG."

**MAGGIE LU YUEYANG**

## **Sentinel raises stake**

Sentinel Property Group has increased its stake in Unity Pacific Ltd to 13.35 per cent as it pursues the group for a back-door listing. ROBERT HARLEY

### UPPING THE ANTE

BRISBANE funds manager Warren Ebert and his Sentinel Group have more than tripled their stake in takeover target Unity Pacific Group.

Ebert revealed yesterday that his holding had hit about 16 per cent, up from 5 per cent as he aims to use Unity as a vehicle for a backdoor listing on the ASX.

"We're putting our money where our mouth is," said Ebert, who has been trying to snare Unity for more than a year.

Unity, which is controlled by Chris Morton and his in-laws in the Pidgeon family of property developers, say they are in talks with several interested parties.

That may be so but it looks like only Ebert, who controls \$1 billion worth of assets, is actually buying lots of shares.

