

My Home

The Northern Territory is known as Australia's last frontier. It's vast and naturally beautiful, but it's also the most culturally diverse region in Australia according to the 2016 Census. The Territory's total population of 245,048 accounts for only one per cent of Australia's population. With one in ten Territorians being born interstate and one in five born overseas, Nannette Holliday talks with the following diverse people to discover why they've chosen to call the Territory 'home'.

PHOTOGRAPHY MARK AND TIM WORDS NANNETTE HOLLIDAY

CHERYL RICHARDSON

“The company I worked for were happy to move me but wanted a 12-month commitment,” she adds. “I said I’ll happily commit to two. Nine years on, I have bought property and proudly call Darwin home.”

Originally from Adelaide, Cheryl Richardson had lived and worked in many Australian states before coming to the Territory for her work in 1999.

“I was an insurance broker and had clients in Darwin that I would visit regularly,” Cheryl said. “I loved these visits. Territorians are so open and friendly. I got to know many people just from sitting at the coffee shop in the Mall.” Loving the intimacy of Darwin, she decided to make a sea change in 2009. “The company I worked for were happy to move me but wanted a 12-month commitment,” she adds. “I said I’ll happily commit to two. Nine years on, I have bought property and proudly call Darwin home.”

Cheryl admits her friends, networking opportunities and the open, honest business people she works with have all added to her positive experiences here.

“There’s more camaraderie and networking opportunities than in bigger cities. It’s easier to meet new people too,” she admits. “I’m spoilt when it comes to my work commute with both my apartment and office at the Waterfront. But I do love the fact we have no real traffic hassles, and even driving to Casuarina or Palmerston only takes 15 minutes. It’s also easier for catching up with people for a coffee or drink after work. It’s unlikely I’ll ever live back in Adelaide. There are just too many benefits in living here.”

When she was first coming to Darwin, Cheryl learnt that leisurely walks suited the lifestyle and weather much better than the fast-paced stride she had in Adelaide. “I used to carry a flannel to wipe the sweat from my brow when I first started visiting Darwin, but I’ve well and truly acclimatised, and slowed down now,” she laughs.

“I love walking around the Waterfront, along the Esplanade and even the Nightcliff foreshore. We’re so lucky in Darwin to have so many great outdoor spaces to enjoy. I also love the multicultural aspects of Darwin and the long-term historical connections of many prominent Darwin families that have contributed to the Territory culture over many generations. Plus the variety of markets and foods each nationality brings.” There are so many opportunities for young people to forge a career in the Territory too. “Many professions don’t have enough skilled people, so it’s easier to get into work. Many also end up staying. They realise we’re a much more progressive city than we’re sometimes portrayed in the media down south.”

Most of all Cheryl loves the lifestyle. “I love the small community feel, but we’re large enough to maintain some privacy. I also enjoy the freedom of going boating with friends on the harbour. Darwin looks completely different from the water.”

It was her confidence in Darwin that made her want to stay, and for Lockton to ask her to open their Darwin office in 2016. “I’m glad I made the change, both my work and personal life have blossomed since moving to Darwin. I think more people should come and check out what it’s like; I’m sure they’d be surprised by the sophistication of our facilities and living.”

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DR KERRY EUPENE



Born in country South-West Queensland, Dr Kerry Eupene, now 70, began his love affair with the Northern Territory in 1970. ‘During my final year of dentistry at the University of Queensland, a recruiter was showing slides of people getting in and out of light aircraft or four-wheel drive vehicles working in remote areas around the Territory. It looked exciting, so up went my hand,’ he laughs. ‘No one knew much about the Territory then, and probably don’t even now. It was a real adventure. I still think that’s part of the Territory’s appeal.’

While the Commonwealth Department of Health was based in Darwin, Kerry worked all around the Territory. ‘We’d spend days driving to the Indigenous communities with mobile caravans, or flying in. Most people, even our bosses had no idea where we were half the time. There was minimal communication,’ he explains. ‘I’ve seen almost every inch of the Territory, and I loved every bit. The people, the situations, it was all so exciting and interesting. ‘All we had was our box of implements when we flew to the communities. We’d set up a row of kitchen chairs and one in the corner. Then we’d look around for the strongest lady to give us a hand. She’d stand behind the chair and act as a headrest for our patient. We’d use car lights whatever else we could find — we had to improvise. We always had a queue of patients. They had so many dental issues and were in pain. We were welcome because we took the pain away.’ Even after establishing the first purpose-built dental surgery on Darwin’s Smith Street in 1976, Dr Kerry continued spending many months away working around the Territory communities, including 12 years at Wadeye. He also assumed the dental care for NT prisons and immigration detention centres.

‘I’ve always enjoyed the variety,’ he admits. ‘Being able to ensure everyone got good oral healthcare was satisfying.’ Kerry’s other passion is in agriculture. ‘Before I commenced university it was a toss-up whether I’d study agriculture or dentistry. Now I have it all,’ he smiles. ‘In 1984, after the third bottle of wine with friends, my wife, Jan, and I bought a 25-acre fruit farm at Bees Creek. While our friends lost interest, mine grew.’

Producing rambutans, pomelo, limes and mandarins their operation is no hobby farm with all being sold interstate or overseas. Jan is also extremely involved with packing, administration, and more.

Dr Kerry jokes about the circle of life — growing up with his parent’s soft drink factory, becoming a dentist and now growing some of the sweetest fruits. ‘At least fresh fruit is better on your teeth,’ he justifies.

He admits farming is a hard life. ‘It’s an emotional rollercoaster when things go wrong it’s always in a big way. Our first crop of rambutans looked amazing. I thought, wow. Then the birds wiped out the entire crop within a day. We were devastated. Now nets cover them. We are currently clear of Citrus Canker, but it’s always a worry, we’re always at the whim of nature. We don’t regret our purchase, but I’m more careful about drinking wine!’

Last year Dr Kerry was made a Member of the Order of Australia for both his passions. ‘It was unexpected and an honour. I do miss the community work though.’

‘We’ve never considered leaving the Territory, not even after Cyclone Tracy, or now that our four children live interstate and overseas. All our friends are here,’ Dr Kerry adds. ‘We love and recommend the easy-going lifestyle, great atmosphere, variety of activities and cultural experiences. There are many opportunities for the people who want to work.’

He reckons the Territory still attracts more overseas people than from interstate. ‘Many of my staff have come from overseas on a working holiday visa, met partners here, married, bought houses, and had children. They’ve become part of my extended family. Only the Territory fosters this, and is what I love the most, seeing them enjoying life and prospering.’

When offered the opportunity to play with Nightcliff Tigers during South Australia’s Australian Rules Football (AFL) off-season, neither Nathan Brown, his family, friends or girlfriend ever imagined he’d stay in Darwin. AFL has always been important to Nathan. ‘Keeping fit and playing the game I love the most during the off-season was too good to refuse,’ says 29-year-old Nathan. ‘I knew within two weeks of being here I wasn’t going to leave. I just loved it here and still do. The hardest thing was explaining my decision to everyone. I’m sure they thought I was crazy.’

That was the 2011/2012 Season, and he’s been the Nightcliff Tigers’ captain since 2015. Unlike his namesake counterparts in the big league, players don’t get paid much, but the clubs do assist with finding work while they are on reassignment. ‘The club found labouring work for me which I did for the first year,’ Nathan adds. ‘Because I’d chosen to stay, and I’m a qualified plasterer, I then established my own plastering business.’

Having always worked for other people, it was a huge step, and now Brown’s Precision Plastering is doing well. ‘It’s hard work and long hours, but I enjoy it. In Adelaide, we worked an eight-hour day. Here we work ten-hour days, even when I was labouring. But there are more opportunities here. I’ll never go back to Adelaide. The lifestyle and people here are not like anywhere else.’

Despite a multitude of football injuries over the last seven years, Nathan’s enjoyed some successes winning the Tigers ‘Most Courageous’ almost every year and ‘Best and Fairest’ Runner-Up in 2016.

‘I’ve coached our Under 18s to two Premiership wins, with my Dad as my Assistant Coach and he’s also had wins as their Coach,’ Nathan continues. ‘Dad came up six months after me. He’s also enjoyed living and working in Darwin but has now moved elsewhere. I’m looking to buy a place around Darwin now, especially with prices dropping, and taking advantage of the First Homebuyers Grant.’

During Darwin’s footy off-season Nathan flies in and out on weekends to play AFL in the Central Murray region.

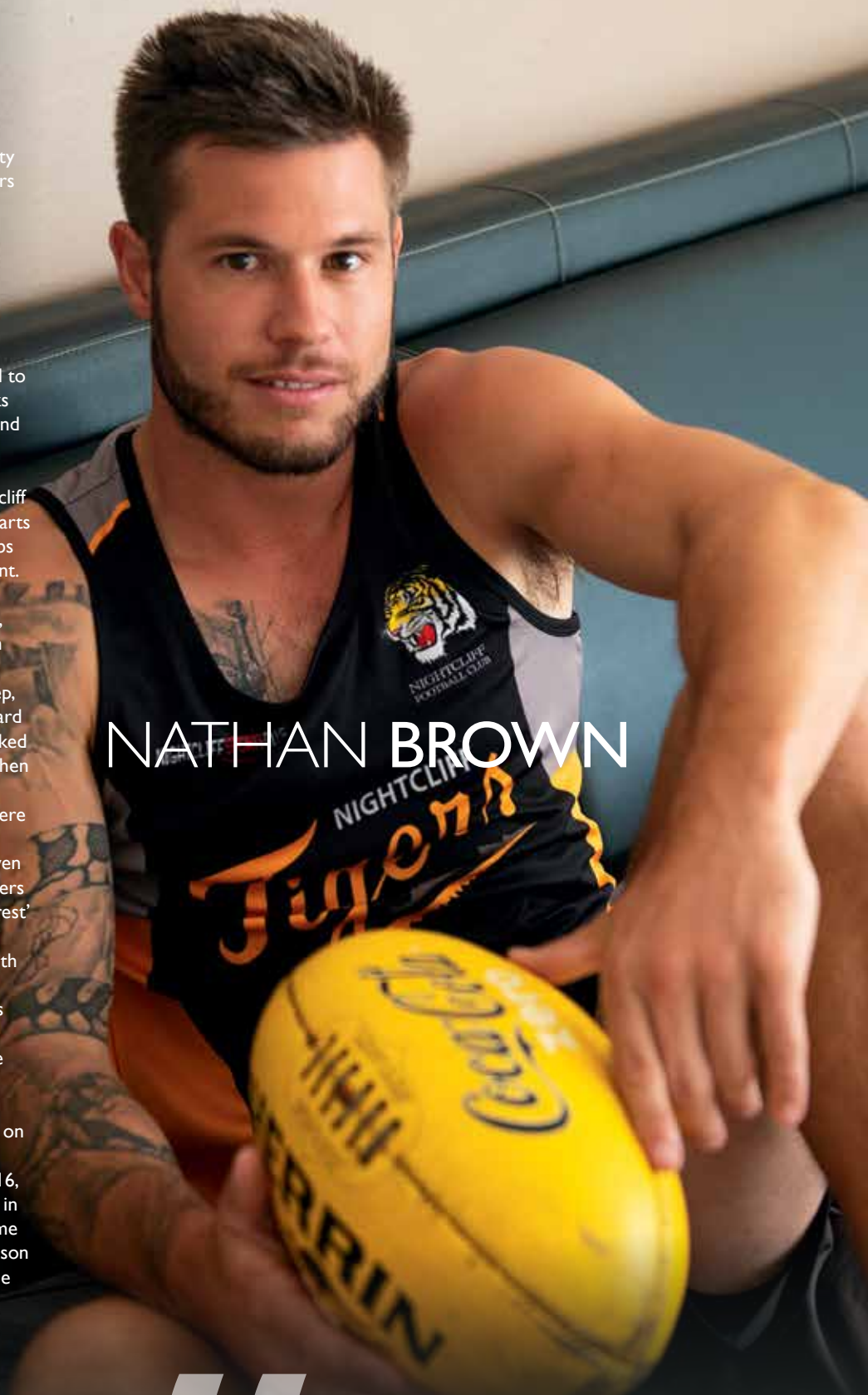
Even when his Murrabit team won the Grand Final in 2016, he didn’t consider living his lifestyle any differently. ‘Flying in and out to play during Victoria’s AFL season only makes me appreciate Darwin even more. Nothing beats the dry season here.’ Even though Nathan spends the majority of his time working, training and playing football or coaching for the Tigers he does escape to enjoy other pursuits.

‘Darwin has something for everyone. Sea, sand, bush, camping, fishing — it’s all at our fingertips.’

‘I’d definitely recommend people come. There’s more to Darwin than Mitchell Street,’ he says. ‘If people are thinking of moving here they should come and spend a couple of weeks getting out and about and looking at what locals do — they’ll be surprised. It’s not the wild frontier it once was, and there are also so many sporting opportunities available. It’s a great place for young people.’

Currently, there’s no girlfriend in Nathan’s life. ‘But I like the fact the chick to bloke ratio is much better these days. The prospects are looking much better’ he laughs.

NATHAN BROWN



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My Home

“We’ll never leave. We love it here, it’s our home.”



ROMOLA SEBASTIAN PILLAI

This year, 2018, marks 40 years since Romola and Bertie Pillai left Sri Lanka with their two daughters aged two and three and moved to New Zealand. ‘We were both sad to leave our parents in Sri Lanka, but they understood Bertie, an anaesthetist, needed to complete his training there. We decided not to stay on in New Zealand as it was too isolated and cold,’ said Romola, now 74. ‘But we loved the Territory when he started his residency in Alice Springs later that year. The people are so wonderful.’ After a year in Alice Springs, the family moved to London for Bertie to complete his Post Graduate studies. ‘London wasn’t our cup of tea either. It’s too crowded, and we couldn’t wait to go back to Australia,’ Romola adds. ‘Bertie could’ve chosen to work anywhere in the world back then, but we decided on Darwin and have never regretted our decision. ‘With a climate similar to Sri Lanka and the people so open and friendly, it made settling in easy. We happily planted both our feet firmly here from day one, not one in each camp. I

wanted to assimilate into the society and meet others, not just our own community people, so I joined a variety of associations.’ The entire family became Australian citizens in 1979. ‘It was one of our proudest moments and the best decision we ever made. We’re all Australians,’ she proudly announces. ‘I’m an Australian and Territorian born in Sri Lanka.’ When not helping her husband with his business bookwork and raising their two daughters Romola did volunteer work with the Darwin Film Society, joined a public speaking group, became President of Cancer Council NT and has now been working with them for over 30 years. ‘Both my parents died from cancer, so working with the Cancer Council is something very close to my heart,’ she adds. ‘One could say I’m a full-time volunteer and I love it. It’s my way of giving back to the country and region that have taken me in and given me a home. I’ve made so many friends through my work, they’re our family now.’ It was her love of dancing that found her involved with the Irish dance group Rince Na H’Eireann. ‘I went to a boarding school run by Irish Nuns and enjoyed Irish music and dancing. It seemed only

natural for me to gravitate towards this group.’ She’s been the group’s President for 12 years now, and they have 67 aspiring students. ‘It’s a gratifying job. When you see the happiness on the faces of the little dancers, it gives me so much pleasure.’ She also does Scottish dancing and Zumba. ‘I love dancing, not only for exercise it’s the comradeship. Bertie plays lots of sports. We’re both still very fit, and here in Darwin it is easy, there’s so much to be involved in.’ She was recently awarded an Order of Australia for her many years of volunteer work. ‘I’m honoured, but never expected it. I have no plans of giving up any of my work though.’ Their two girls are married and live interstate, and while they visit their three grandchildren regularly, they don’t have any plans of moving to be closer to them. ‘It’s lovely to see our children and grandchildren, but we’ve made our corner here in Darwin. We have a very active life and a wide circle of friends,’ Romola concludes. ‘Our friends here are our big family. We enjoy lots of social outings together — music, theatre, dancing and more. We’ll never leave. We love it here, it’s our home.’

When two Sisters of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) were leaving the Tiwi Islands for another mission posting in 2001, the Tiwi people were asked if ‘they’d like the old girl back.’

When they said yes, Sister Anne Gardiner knew she would never leave again.

‘The Territory is my home, and the Tiwi people my family and I’m grateful for their love and understanding during all my years with them,’ says 86 year-old Sister Anne. Sister Anne’s first interaction with the Tiwi Aboriginals was at age 22 when she landed on Bathurst Island in 1953. ‘Being appointed to the Tiwi Islands was everything I’d always wanted.’

Born in Gundagai New South Wales, the youngest of four children, Anne Gardiner almost didn’t become a Sister either. After completing school at St Joseph’s Ladies College in Albury, she returned to Gundagai and worked as a secretary for two years in Coolac.

‘I enjoyed the work. But I kept looking at a small prayer card given to me by two Sisters who had visited our school,’ she continues. ‘The photo on the other side of the prayer showed missionary nuns in a canoe with a Tiwi woman. I wanted to be in that canoe.’

Beginning her postulant training near Bowral in 1949, she failed her first six months. ‘I was a bit of a tomboy, and here I was trying to become a nun. I had to spend an extra six months to think about my choices.’

When presented with her Religious habit, the officiating bishop was Bishop Francis Xavier Gsell, the founder of the MSC mission on Bathurst Island, another link to the Tiwi people.

OLSH Missions operated in Papua New Guinea, Gilbert Island and the Northern Territory. ‘When I was appointed to the Tiwi Islands I knew it was all meant to be. The small prayer card now has pride of place in the Patakijiyali (Tiwi for Father Gsell) Museum here.’

At St Therese’s School in Nguiu, she’s taught generations of children Religious Education and later became the Principal. ‘When the first girl trained by the school died the Tiwi wanted to rename the school after her. I supported this. It’s now Murrupurtiyanuwu Primary School, and St Therese is the patroness. I also saw the appointment of a Tiwi Principal during my time.’

Not all of Sister Anne’s mission years have been on Tiwi. She’s worked at St Mary’s and St John’s College in Darwin, Daly River, Port Keats and six years on Nauru Island.

‘When the Australian Government gave self-determination to all Aboriginal people some went it alone but the Tiwi wanted a Priest and the Sisters to remain. For this, I feel very grateful, and I’m still providing RE lessons every week.’ Not that she sought it, but Sister Anne has been recognised for her work — a Lyn Powierza Scholarship in 1993 for her contribution to education in the Northern Territory, an Order of Australia in 1996, and in 2017 she was named Senior Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory and later the Senior Australian of the Year 2017.

‘It’s been my joy to witness and experience the Tiwi people manage organisations, conduct schools and health clinics, train others and administer businesses and now the women are successfully running the museum.’

The Patakijiyali Museum has been Sister Anne’s labour of love. It showcases the Tiwi people’s spirituality, art, culture, language and sporting history. A section is dedicated to the mission, and the Hall of Fame is reserved for Tiwi athletes, including Aussie Rules footballers David Kantilla, Maurice Rioli and Michael Long.

Sister Anne has seen much change on the Tiwi Islands and across the Top End, but loves the cosmopolitan nature of the Territory and says the people haven’t changed.

‘We’re from all over the world, but we are one. We all have red blood,’ she concludes. ‘I’m so grateful to my congregation for allowing me to stay for so long. My resting place will be here. I’m so pleased.’

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SISTER ANNE GARDINER

My Home

EMMA BRADLEY
& AARON BAKER



I loved Darwin from the moment I arrived, the warmth of the people and weather, no traffic hassles and the laid-back lifestyle.

This year, 2018 has been life-changing for 30 year-olds Emma Bradley and Aaron Baker, 'We became Australian citizens in October,' they said excitedly. 'We also bought and moved into our own home in Palmerston in

July. We love it here and are proud to say Darwin is our home now.' Both are from the United Kingdom and met just six years ago. Both also originally came to Australia on 12-month working holiday visas. 'I'd been here two weeks and was intending to work in Darwin for two months before travelling around the rest of Australia,' says Emma. 'Then I met Aaron at Shenanigans, and haven't left. It's not just because of him though I also love the Top End, the weather, the people, everyone's happy. Even the wet season doesn't bother me.' Aaron had been in Australia since late 2009. 'I worked in Perth first before travelling up the west coast to Darwin,' Aaron explains. 'I loved Darwin from the moment I arrived, the warmth of the people and weather, no traffic hassles and the laid-back lifestyle. It's so easy to escape to that hidden camping, hunting or fishing spot. There's so much to do within a 30-minute drive. It's completely different to the UK; the open country here makes life so appealing.' They've visited other Australian cities but firmly say they couldn't live in a big city ever again. Both Aaron, a qualified plumber, and Emma, now a body corporate manager had no difficulties in quickly finding suitable employment either. 'Our parents have visited and are thrilled for us. Even though my mum cries regularly, she is truly happy,' Emma smiles. 'I could never imagine living back in the UK now.' 'I'm the same,' Aaron adds. 'I can't imagine what we'd do. I'd definitely miss the fishing and camping.' Emma had never considered herself an outdoors person, 'But living in the Top End makes me want to get out and about,' she adds. 'I recently went goose hunting with Aaron because his mate couldn't go. At sunrise, we're wading through a billabong knee-high in reeds and mud, and I innocently say to him, 'Aren't there crocodiles here?' He looks at me with a huge grin, 'Of course, there are.' I'm sure I walked on water to get back to the car!' They both admit Christmas is the hardest time. 'That's when we miss family the most, and the fact there's no snow,' says Aaron. 'We've been back a couple of times for Christmas,' Emma adds. 'Otherwise, we've got a great group of friends, and they're our family here. We won't be going this year having just bought our home.' 'The first homeowners grant was also a huge help in buying our home,' Emma continues. 'We'd never have been able to afford a home otherwise. We've been extremely fortunate here in the Territory.' Aaron admits that within a year of being in Australia he knew he wanted to stay forever and become an Australian citizen. 'I knew within six months,' laughs Emma. 'Mind you it's cost us a small fortune to be able to stay, but it's been worth every cent. There are heaps of opportunities, and we'll eventually raise a family here too.'



JOHN BREARS

We're a sporting paradise and very cosmopolitan with all nationalities living harmoniously side-by-side.

In 1985, English engineer John Brears and his family were living and working near Jakarta, Indonesia when they decided to visit Joan's brother who worked for Customs in Darwin. 'We had no idea what to expect, but being so close we thought we'd catch up and have a week in Bali on the way back,' John said. 'We were immediately attracted to Darwin, the tropical climate, small population, readily available facilities, well-stocked supermarkets, few cars on the road and many cranes on the skyline. It was a positive place.' During the previous ten years, John had worked in London, Dubai, Jordan, Gambia and Indonesia, with the family in tow. 'Most were third world countries or regions, even Dubai only had one hotel in those days,' he added. While they were visiting Darwin, the Australian Government announced their list of preferred immigrants for that year. 'Coincidentally it included 100 engineers. I fitted the category, the age, and family requirements. Joan agreed we should apply.' Three weeks later after completing the paperwork and interviews in Jakarta, they were granted their visas. 'We had six months to organise ourselves and move to Australia,' continued John. 'Naturally, we'd chosen Darwin. It ticked all our boxes.' Their sons were eight and nine and had been previously booked into a boarding school in the UK. 'John's parents weren't happy when I arrived back to pack up and sell our house. They had been expecting to be able to host the boys on

weekends from boarding school,' added Joan. 'Truthfully, we couldn't stand the cold. There were no second thoughts about coming to Darwin. We've lived here ever since and love the place. We're Territorians now. Even though our boys now live down south, we'll never move. We all became Australian citizens within the first couple of years.' Joan's brother was away when the family arrived back in Darwin. 'We stayed in his house,' Joan continued. 'He'd left a job advertisement on the table for John.' Within a week John was appointed as the new Project Manager with John Holland Constructions to build the first high school in Palmerston. 'It was slightly different to the civil engineering I'd been managing, plus I had to learn about Australian colloquialisms and the construction tradies unique language, like smoko and crib room. These don't exist beyond the Australian border,' laughed John. 'Also being a Pom, and telling Australian tradies what we should and shouldn't be doing was sometimes a little challenging and a huge learning curve.' John's biggest project during his four years with John Holland was managing the design and construction of the Crocodile Hotel in Jabiru. John and Joan also built a house at the new suburb of Brinkin during this time. 'With John away, I was the site supervisor, also doing all the painting, even though I was afraid of heights. I was determined to make it liveable as soon as possible,' Joan recalled. 'We've lived in over 35 homes eight of them have been in Darwin. John also built several

townhouses for investment. When he finished our current home in Stuart Park, I told him I wasn't moving again!' Other significant buildings around Darwin that John project managed include the Supreme Court and Parliament House. For relaxation, he built a 30-foot catamaran. 'We have enjoyed many years sailing around the coast and on Darwin Harbour. I've just donated it to the Ambon sailing community,' John said. 'But the first boat I built was in Dubai. Because I'd previously sailed, the blue waters off Dubai were too inviting, but there weren't many boats for sale, or they were expensive, so I built this simple sailing dingy on our marble-floored dining room. When complete we turned it sideways to get it out the front door.' Now retired, John and Joan are still very active within the community and as Rotary International members. 'While we enjoy exploring other places around the world, we'll never live anywhere else. We love Darwin, the people, the community spirit and quality of life, it's well and truly our home,' John continues. 'The majority of people in Darwin have come from somewhere else and while some don't stay those who do are what I call the get-up and go type of people. They're prepared to leave their hometown, family and friends behind, travel, have an adventure and enjoy the opportunities that Darwin has to offer. 'We're a sporting paradise and very cosmopolitan with all nationalities living harmoniously side-by-side. We have a vast array of worldly cuisines and a great harbour for sailing. I'd recommend Darwin to anyone willing to put in the effort.'

My Home

T loved Darwin from the moment I landed here with my three children,' said Teresa Kalisnik. 'It's the best move we ever made.' From Palestine Teresa's husband had been working as a skilled labourer in Darwin for a year before the family arrived. 'I was 20 then, but I was excited to come to Darwin, it was a new beginning,' she continued. 'Darwin has been a great place to raise my six children. They all have good lifestyles here in Australia and can choose what they want to do, and when, without the cultural pressures of our society, like my life.' Teresa was married at 13 in Palestine and had her first child a month before turning 14. She didn't want that for her four girls. A strong and determined woman, even at nine-months pregnant she was carrying bricks to finish their new lowset home in Wackett Street, Jingili. Just after this, in November 1974, her husband's work took the family to Roper River. 'We missed Cyclone Tracy, but our house survived,' she smiled. 'Only one corner brick had been damaged by the neighbour's roof coming off.'

Her husband's work then took them to Moree. 'We lived there for eight years, but my heart was always in the Territory. Returning was so good. I was finally home again,' she said. 'I love the warmer weather and the friendliness of the people.' In 1998, she married Kris. Together they enjoy the fruits of their 6-acre Bees Creek farm where they breed chickens and grow lemons, limes, pink grapefruit, dragon fruit, pawpaw, bananas and mangoes, mostly organically. 'We began with mangoes, but they take three to four years to fruit. I told Kris we needed to diversify; otherwise, we'd have nothing,' she said. 'We're licensed to sell the lemons and limes to local stores. Thankfully we are Citrus Canker free. I don't know what I'd do without my orchards.'

Teresa loves her fruit orchards, the bush and being able to go fishing and crabbing, even though she can't swim a stroke. 'I've made sure all my children, and 19 grandchildren can swim though,' she laughs. 'Katie, an Indigenous woman at Roper River, taught me how to fish from sitting off the tree branch over the river. I was scared, but we caught big barra there.'

Every few days they now go fishing in their seven-metre boat. 'It's easy to do this in the Territory. We're lucky. We used to go camping, but with the bigger boat we no longer camp.'

Kris and Teresa have thought about retiring, but love their farm, and the friendships it's brought. 'They are like extended family, some we've known for 30 to 40 years. We have a good balanced lifestyle and will keep going as long as our health allows. I love where we are. The city is only 30 minutes away if I need anything else,' she said. 'I'm always recommending the Territory to friends and family. The lifestyle is like no other, and there are still many opportunities. I've been fortunate in Darwin.'

TERESA & KRIS KALISNIK

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ROB JOHNSON

“ Only in the Territory would people give you the shirt off their back if you're in need.

Shortly after arriving in Darwin with his parents in 1955 Rob Johnson celebrated his third birthday. 'My parents were missionaries. We lived in Aboriginal communities at Darwin, Daly River and Borrooloola,' he said. 'It was vastly different to Cessnock where I was born. I loved the weather and exploring my surroundings, fishing, sailing, swimming. I'd learnt how to croc and pig shoot before I was seven. I reckon the Territory was made for me.'

Leaving school at 16, he culled pigs on Croker Island. 'I boarded the plane with my rifle slung over my shoulder. You can't do that now,' he laughs. 'The island had wild TB infected pigs on the north side and were paying a slaughterer bounty so they wouldn't affect the healthy pigs on the other side.'

His journey back to Darwin was on the coastal freighter 'Betty Joan'. 'It was the first boat I'd been on that you could live on, eat, sleep, carry cars and more - I knew then I wanted to work here. Mum was horrified. She reckoned the men were rough, drank too much, smoked, and more. Then she told me all three of my uncles had been in the Royal Australian Navy; one had even served in Darwin during the bombings in 1942. I applied to join the Royal Australian Navy.' He'd barely completed his basic schooling so Rob didn't think he'd have a chance. 'But I got accepted into communications. The fact I'd had a radio

operators licence since I was 14 sealed the deal.' Melbourne was cold, wet and miserable for this tropical boy. His first posting was on HMAS Vendetta in 1969. 'We went straight to war in Vietnam. I turned 18 on the ship and hadn't even realised it. We were that busy.'

When Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin his ship, HMAS Hobart was sent to assist. 'Dad and my youngest sister were there. Mum was in Fort Worth Texas completing her Master in Music. It wasn't until we stopped in Cairns that I knew Dad was okay and they'd driven to Sydney.'

Only the stumps remained of his family's Nightcliff home. 'Everything but the toilet was gone, including Mum's piano. My rifle cases were closed and zipped, but the rifles had disappeared.' Rob discharged from the Navy on 12 February 1975. 'Dad and I had decided to open a bike shop back in Darwin, unfortunately, he died in an accident on the way back. It was a sad return.' Like many, Rob lived under the old family home in a caravan before taking the caretakers role at Ted Fitzgerald's property on Cox Peninsula. In 1982 he married his second wife Tracy at the property, and shortly after the birth of their daughter, they bought a Gaff Top Sail Cutter, the 'Ibis' to live on back in Darwin.

'During the dry, we anchored in Fannie Bay, the wet in Sadgroves Creek. We rode out Cyclone Max on that boat, and our other two children were born there. It was a great lifestyle, but when Mum moved to Adelaide in 1989, we followed.'

Later they settled in Perth and built an investment house. 'Tracy didn't want to move, but I longed for my sailing life,' he confides. 'I began working on fishing trawlers, resurrected all my maritime tickets and sailed tourists around the Kimberley until I was offered a job with Paspaley.'

This brought him back to Darwin in 2007. 'I was happy, I was home again,' Rob smiles. After buying a 38-foot Catamaran, the 'Ku Chang' in Brisbane, he refurbished it in Bundaberg and sailed it back to Darwin. 'Off Cobourg Peninsula, near the Vernon Islands, I met my Paspaley boat 'Christine'. It was poetic.'

Although Rob retired in 2010, it hasn't actually eventuated. 'I have so many friends the part-time job offers flowed - on tugs, in a marine store, sailing tourists around the harbour and more. I never get bored with boats, and Darwin Harbour is a fabulous playground.'

Recently the 'Ku Chang' needed some major work done, so Rob bought a small monohull, the 'Fair Breeze' to call home. During Cyclone Marcus this year, a rogue boat damaged both, so he's currently living at a friend's unit in town while fixing them. 'Only in the Territory would people give you the shirt off their back if you're in need,' he admits. 'That's what I love so much. I'm not moving ever again. Darwin is well and truly in me and is my home. I love that it's still small and has that country town feel, everyone's open and friendly. Those who don't live here don't know what they're missing!'



SEB & MING

PHOTOGRAPHED BY NANNETTE HOLLIDAY

Each area of the Territory may have different natural attributes, but there's one thing that remains constant throughout — the supportive, friendly people. It's just a Territory thing.

In 2006 Adelaide born Sebastian (Seb) Hall was on his way to live in Far North Queensland when he made a stop at Alice Springs. 'Within three days I'd fallen in love with the town and decided I no longer needed to go to Queensland, I'd found my paradise,' he said.

Seb first worked with Andrew Langford. 'I was to teach him the piano, and he would teach me how to play the didgeridoo, and in typical Territory fashion I ended up working for him for three years selling didgeridoos. I didn't know anyone when I first arrived, except a couple of cousins that I hadn't seen in decades. They met me at the Ghan as I stepped off the train and put me up for the first few weeks after I decided to stay. It also didn't take long to make other friends because everyone is so open and friendly.'

After his father died, Seb returned to Adelaide in 2014 to be with his mum, but within six months he missed the Alice and the friendships he'd formed. 'When the government agency I was working for had a vacancy in Alice Springs I grabbed it and haven't looked back since,' he continues.

Taiwan born Ming Wee Yang arrived in Alice Springs on a 12-month working holiday visa in March 2017. 'Friends had been to Alice Springs years earlier and said how beautiful it was, and I must go there,' said Ming. 'During my first week in town, I met Seb at Monte's.'

'I was sitting with friends and in walked this stunning man with short shorts. I just had to

snap him up,' laughed Seb. 'After my birthday in September 2017, I asked him to marry me. To my surprise, he said yes.'

Ming was living in a share house with other Taiwanese people who didn't go out much, but as he'd been a tour leader in Taiwan and travelled around Asia and Europe, he wanted to see Australia.

'I experienced so much more with Seb and his friends,' he added. 'The excitement of Territory Day, seeing the amazing surrounding countryside, camping at all the local sites — I experienced so much more than my country folk. It was just so beautiful.'

Because Seb was working with Indigenous people, he also learned that what others had said wasn't true. 'Not all Aboriginals are the same. The people I've met are just lovely.'

In Alice Springs Ming worked as a kitchen hand and also did some translation work. In 2017 when Seb was offered a package in Katherine, Ming was also happy to go. However after leaving their friends and relocating the job wasn't what was promised. 'But we discovered the same community spirit existed as Alice Springs, and newly made friends rallied around to help us out,' continues Seb. 'Each area of the Territory may have different natural attributes, but there's one thing that remains constant throughout — the supportive, friendly people. It's just a Territory thing.'

Ming is now working back in the travel industry, and Seb is running CDUP programs, teaching life and industrial kitchen skills to the Indigenous.

'We were getting married in Alice Springs in September 2018, but when we moved to Katherine logistically it was more convenient for friends and family if we married in Darwin,' said Seb. 'We chose Cullen Bay beach and Lola's Pergola for our reception as it's the sister bar and restaurant to Monte's Lounge in Alice Springs where we'd met. People book months in advance for the beach, but we were lucky our date was free when I called.'

When Seb arranged to have a coffin at their wedding site, no one was surprised, but they were expecting Ming to rise from it. 'Seb has a dark sense of humour,' explains Ming. 'But the coffin, while a bit of fun, was just as serious as our wedding. It symbolised the death of our single lives.'

'The Territory tends to draw people back at some stage, and our friends are spread throughout now,' adds Seb. 'It has so much to offer, but every part is different. The one thing in common is the friendliness and supportiveness of the people. They genuinely care and would take the shirt off their back if you needed it. It's extremely special. There are so many opportunities here that don't exist in the rest of Australia.'

'The Territory is nothing like any part of Asia. I love it,' adds Ming. 'Anyone thinking about coming should spend some time looking around, meeting locals and seeing what it's really like, not just the tourist spots. I love my new home and our wonderful friends. I feel so lucky I met Seb, the journey to date has been amazing. I'm so looking forward to the rest of our lives.'

RESIDENT FEATURE

My Home



KYLIE & DEREK PARTRIDGE

PHOTOGRAPHED BY KATHERINE MORROW

Although Kylie had worked as a travel agent in Darwin from 2004 to 2007, it was her teacher's training experience at Kalkaringi Community School, 480kms southwest of Katherine, to complete her education degree in 2011 that cemented her love for the Territory. 'It was vastly different from Melbourne, but I loved it. It wasn't as fast paced as the city, the relaxed lifestyle and natural beauty made me more aware of the things I valued. When the school advertised a teaching position in 2013, I knew I wanted it,' said Kylie. 'The school serviced both Kalkaringi and Daguragu communities. I enjoyed my two years working with the indigenous people, and also met Derek there.'

Derek, a carpenter, was working at the school in March 2014. 'It was Kylie's birthday and us tradies were invited to help celebrate,' adds Derek. 'As they say — the rest is history.'

Derek, from New South Wales, had been in Katherine since 2007. 'My work takes me to all the surrounding communities often for several

weeks at a time,' Derek said. 'It's interesting and enjoyable, but my first impression on arrival was 'What have I got myself into'. Thankfully I stayed otherwise I wouldn't have met Kylie. I've been here 12 years now and love the Territory. It's the land of opportunity, provided you're willing to work hard.' Moving in with Derek in Katherine, Kylie did roving relief teaching. 'From Monday to Friday I'd travel around various communities and come back to Katherine on weekends,' she explains. 'I'm now working in an Autism Spectrum program in Katherine with another lady. We work with five and six-year-old children.'

Kylie and Derek married in August 2018 at Katherine Outback Experience. 'We had our wedding and reception there, it was just beautiful, and the support from our Katherine friends was amazing too,' said Kylie. 'Community is a huge thing, and we all look out for each other.'

'While it's tough not being close to your family we appreciate visiting them or them visiting us. We love showing our family and friends around our region. The scenery, getting out, there's so much to see and do,' adds Derek. 'We're surrounded with so many great places. Nitmiluk,

Mataranka, Kakadu, Kununurra and of course Darwin, plus a range of small secret spots. The Territory is so different to anywhere else.'

'During my short stint at the Katherine Visitor Information Centre I enjoyed meeting the variety of people coming through and telling them about what to see and do around my hometown,' adds Kylie. For anyone thinking of moving to the NT Kylie and Derek's advice is to bring a sense of adventure, be open-minded and non-judgmental, be prepared to venture out and go to places you never imagined you'd ever go.

'The Territory gets under your skin. We love it. People often ask why did I leave Byron Bay,' Derek explains. 'There was little work, and I was being paid minimal wages. I got a job as soon as I arrived at Katherine and the pay was equal to my qualifications. I've never looked back.'

'Coming to the Territory helped me reassess who I was and what I wanted in life,' said Kylie. 'Working with the indigenous is a humbling experience.'

Both agreed they love the warmer weather, the sense of community, adventure and relaxed pace. It has opened our eyes. 'Coming to Katherine was the best move we have ever made.'

My Home

“Bella also speak some Indigenous words. The Territory is definitely in us all. We love it at Nitmiluk.”

LUKE AND SEONA MOSS.

A spirit of adventure drives both Luke and Seona Moss. When they first met at Uluru in early 2013, neither expected they'd be calling the Territory home. From north New South Wales, Chef Seona worked for a decade

in some of Australia's top restaurants including Ecco Bistro in Brisbane and Vue de Monde in Melbourne before travelling and working in Europe. 'Once I'd reached Sous Chef level we were expected to work overseas to gain more experience,' says Seona. 'I've always been selective about where I worked, and by choosing the third world-ranked restaurant, Noma in Scandinavia, I thought I would have a better chance of getting in as everyone I knew was applying for the then number one El Bulli in Spain.'

That was October 2009. 'In April 2010 Noma became the number one restaurant in the world. It was an incredible time, and working with so many amazing chefs of all different nationalities was a highlight.'

After also working in Denmark and France, Seona came back to Australia in 2011 to work at Longitude 131 at Uluru. 'I thought Longitude was the perfect place to create a unique style of cuisine reflective of the environment. Our heartland is incredibly vibrant, the soul of the country, and so beautiful. It's like living in a painting. I wanted that beauty to transfer to the plate, to complement the guest experience.'

Seona had always worked in boutique restaurants. 'I'd never worked in a hotel before, so coming in as an entry-level chef I learned a lot about other areas of the operation and what guests wanted besides good food. By the time I became Executive Chef I had a thorough understanding of everyone's needs. If I'd come in as a head chef

straight away without that experience, I would've been like a bull in a china shop. It was the perfect learning curve.'

Queensland born Luke, a hospitality manager, arrived from Western Australia to work at Yulara in January 2013, and by early 2014 Seona had accepted his proposal. 'Luke proposed on the sand dune overlooking Uluru and Kata Tjuta where we'd had our first picnic date,' smiles Seona. 'We had our reception at Tali Wiru that I had previously run and created menus for before Sails took over the management. Our daughter Bella was also christened on that dune in 2015.'

'Even our wedding had a unique Territory aspect,' laughs Luke. 'Seona wasn't late, our priest who'd driven from Coober Pedy was. When he arrived, he got dressed in front of everyone.'

'We love all these crazy things and laidback style of the Territory,' says Seona. 'Even Luke's wedding ring that we'd ordered from Ireland online hadn't arrived. But late Saturday afternoon Will from the post office ran into my beauticians announcing, 'I've got this box I know what it is.' He'd picked it up especially for us. Otherwise Luke would've been wearing a zippy tie.'

Despite all this and both children being conceived in the Territory Luke and Seona bought property and moved to Tasmania in late 2015. 'We loved the Territory, but neither of us had been to Tassie,' Luke explains. 'I'd been searching Australia-wide for a property and Steiner School within a 50-kilometre radius. After purchasing this bush block off the internet, sight unseen, I bought a 30-foot caravan and refurbished it before hauling it, my pregnant wife and daughter with our brand new Landrover Defender to Tassie. On arrival, we couldn't work out which block was ours and just parked the van until the estate agent showed us on Monday. It turned out we were

totally on the wrong block!'

The van was like a small home with a fireplace and space for the kids to play. 'It was so cold outside Luke was always chopping firewood so the kids and I could stay warm. I kept saying how I missed the Territory and he constantly joked that I'd never left the Territory it was so hot in the van I never even needed a jumper.'

When their third winter was about to hit they both decided to return to the Territory. 'It was just too cold, wet and miserable. We wanted the kids to be able to run around outside,' they said. 'We quit our part-time jobs, bought a camper trailer, booked our tickets on the Spirit of Tasmania before we'd even found work back in the Territory. Coming back to the Territory was top of our list.' Through their contacts, Luke secured a job as the Food and Beverage Manager for Nitmiluk Tours and Cicada Lodge, while Seona now spends time with the children. 'We're so glad to be back. Our kids love the weather here, they're always outside, often blending into the surrounding grass,' laughs Seona. 'Bella also speak some Indigenous words. The Territory is definitely in us all. We love it at Nitmiluk. Every opportunity we go away to stunning nearby locations like Edith Falls, Mataranka, Kakadu, further up the gorges – there's so much to see and do.'

'Recently a baby wallaby came into our house and jumped on Noah's back. Bella told him 'Don't worry joey just wants a piggyback.' That would never happen in a city,' says Luke. 'We're looking forward to having Christmas at Nitmiluk. Our friends and family see how much we love it here. The weather, culture, rugged, untouched landscape, vivid sunsets, star-studded night skies, open spaces, friendly smiling faces and wonderful, helpful people — we are so blessed. There's nowhere else in the world like the Territory.'

“We arrived in town on Monday, had job interviews Tuesday and had jobs that afternoon.”

KATRINA & GARY LUCAS

Born in 1979, Katrina Anlezark spent her younger years growing up at Mainoru Station, the property her parents managed, three-hours drive east of Katherine up the Central Arnhem Highway.

'I loved the people and the wild, untamed country, but we moved to Queensland in the mid-80s for our schooling,' she said. 'When I came back in June 2009 to bury Dad at Mainoru, I knew immediately I just had to live in Katherine.'

Never mind the good job she had in Sydney, or the lovely man from Geelong that she'd met a few months earlier at her sister-in-laws 40th birthday on the Gold Coast. 'As soon as I got back to Sydney I began looking for jobs in Katherine. Without having anything, I quit my job and began packing up,' she continued. 'Right or wrong I was moving to Katherine.' By November 2009, Katrina and her mother had arrived back in Katherine and Katrina had secured a job with the Katherine Visitor Centre. The only person not happy about her move was Gary Lucas, but he didn't give up that easily.

Queensland born, Gary was working in Geelong, Victoria. 'In December 2009 I took five days off work and flew to Katherine. I missed Katrina and had to know what was so special about this place that she wanted to

make it home,' he said.

'I gave him a whirlwind tour of the Top End, Darwin, Kakadu, Mainoru Station, Nitmiluk and Katherine all in five days! I wanted to make sure he liked it here before committing to move,' Katrina explained. 'Obviously, he did because he came up in April 2010.'

By 2012, Gary had not only fallen in love with the Territory but also Katrina, and after completing the 62-kilometre Jabula Trail from Nitmiluk Gorge to Edith Falls, he'd planned a romantic weekend stay in Darwin. 'I thought he was nuts when he wanted to walk from our Mitchell Street hotel to the George Brown Botanic Gardens after just completing the trail,' she laughs. 'But when the fountain was under repair and not operating, he insisted on going to the rainforest waterfall, which also wasn't working. When he said let's go to the Waterfront, I thought, 'Surely he's not going to want to walk there too!' Finally, it all became clear when he proposed during dinner. I had no idea he was going to ask me to marry him, but it was very romantic in the end.'

To support Gary's elderly parents, they moved to Brisbane and along with working they both studied for their dream jobs. 'I'd always wanted to be a nurse and Gary an electrician,' she continues. 'During the five years in Brisbane, I completed my degree and Gary his apprenticeship, and we had two children. However, when his parents passed

away in 2017 we both agreed we wanted to live back in Katherine.'

Arriving back in May 2018, 'It was like we'd never left,' Katrina beams. 'We arrived in town on Monday, had job interviews Tuesday and had jobs that afternoon. We stayed with friends until we got our own place. Now we are looking for a nice acreage property for the kids to grow up on.'

Katrina is a Registered nurse in the children's ward at Katherine Hospital. Gary works for Power Projects. Their 17-month-old daughter Olivia, and three-year-old son Charlie have also settled into the relaxed lifestyle.

'Our main reason for returning was we missed the sense of community and being involved with the community,' adds Gary. 'Katherine people really help each other out, and most of our friends are still here. It's such a friendly place, and the outdoor lifestyle is great for the kids. It's the best place to raise a family. With no long drives to and from work, we have more time to do family things too.'

They both agree the natural surrounds of Katherine are second to none. 'It can't be matched. It's absolutely gorgeous,' said Katrina. 'There's so much to see and do — 4WD driving, fishing, camping and more. If you want a slice of luxury, we're close enough to Darwin to enjoy a five-star weekend getaway, the beach and Waterfront. We really enjoy being back. We're home now. It's just fabulous.'

My Home



NICK AND NICA WALKER

“There are many more opportunities here that you don't get in the crowded southern market.”

When 26-year-old Nick Walker went to run the UN Eurest Support Services in Timor Leste in 2000, he never imagined he'd be calling the Northern Territory home two years later.

Nick had always lived and worked in his birth city of Melbourne, but in Timor he met Timorese born Nica, also working for the United Nations. Within a year they married in Timor. When Nick's work finished in August 2002, he decided to move to Darwin, rather than returning to Melbourne.

'I had been to Darwin a few times on holidays and loved it, so it made sense to settle here, especially with the closeness to Timor,' Nick said. 'I didn't have a job, but I had both a job and suitable accommodation by the time Nica arrived in November 2002.'

In the beginning, Nica struggled to find work. 'So I obtained a Certificate in Hospitality Management and then worked at Hanuman for 18 months before gaining employment in the NT Government,' she said. 'Then I studied Business Administration at Charles Darwin University (CDU) through the NT Government Training Program gaining two Certificates and a Diploma. I am now a Payroll Officer. I love my work, and being in the Territory. It has given me many opportunities.'

Nick has also completed his Masters in Business Administration here in Darwin and is now in a management role with Veolia. 'Life is going well for us both. We have no regrets about moving here,' he continues. 'We are very happy and have no plans to leave, even though we've recently finished building a house in Timor, it is for Nica's elderly parents and family and a place for us to stay when visiting them.'

'In 2006 we purchased our home in Marrara by utilising the NT Government's First Home Owners Grant. It was a huge help in getting us into our own place.'

Both agree the Territory is a fantastic place to develop your career. 'There are many more opportunities here that you don't get in the crowded southern market,' Nick states. 'We also like the fact there are lots of things to do from Darwin. I'm always boasting that I have three National Parks as my backyard.'

Once a year they continue to visit family in Melbourne and also Timor. 'Both are easy to get to from Darwin,' adds Nick. 'I also tell friends we're only two hours away from Asia. We can fly to Singapore, Bali or Timor for a weekend, and it's usually quicker and cheaper than going south.'

They love the community aspects of life in Darwin too. 'You can immerse yourself in loads of different things, sporting groups, the arts, camping, fishing and much more, plus enjoy the variety of markets and multicultural events around town. We are fortunate to have it all at our fingertips.'

They have both found it easy to develop friends and have good networks through their work and social groups. 'Veolia belongs to the Palmerston and Regional Business Association which enables us to enjoy excellent networking and social events,' said Nick. 'Nica first found support in the local Timorese group and then widened her social network through her studies at CDU and work.'

They admit that one of the best things about living and working in Darwin is the relaxed, stress-free lifestyle. 'Everything is an easy 10-15 minutes drive away there's no road rage. People aren't stressed or angry. We love Darwin. It's the best move we ever made. The Territory will always be our home.'



RANDAL
& OLIVIA
ASHFORD

RESIDENT FEATURE

My Home

“It’s the ideal place to establish your career. I have achieved more in the ten years since returning home than I would have in 15 to 20 years had I stayed in Brisbane or any other city.”

Introduced by mutual friends in Darwin five years ago, Olivia didn’t take much notice of Randal Ashford, except that he kept visiting the café where she then worked. ‘Virtually every day I’d have coffee or lunch there trying to get to know her,’ he admits. ‘Eventually, she accepted my invitation to play beach volleyball. Then she agreed to let me teach her how to play tennis. After the lesson, I set up a picnic at Cullen Bay to enjoy the sunset together, but a storm ruined the moment.’ ‘Then he told me he was volunteering with the Salvation Army to feed the homeless dinner on Christmas and Boxing Day, of course, I wanted to help too,’ adds Olivia. ‘That was the beginning of our relationship.’ ‘From the moment we met I knew she was the one,’ continues Randal. ‘On our first real date, I took a photo of her walking beside the pylons under the Nightcliff jetty and sent it to my three best mates saying ‘I’m going to marry her.’ I just knew.’ Within six weeks of their original introduction, they were holidaying in Bali together. Olivia then moved into Randal’s apartment. ‘After a few weeks we chose our dog Rupert together, but I didn’t propose until three years later,’ Randal adds. ‘There was no rush. We were happy.’ Born in Adelaide, Olivia moved to Darwin with her family in 2000 from Sydney. ‘Dad hadn’t worked in a year and came to Darwin where he got work straight away,’ Olivia continues. ‘I loved Darwin from the day we arrived and completed all my schooling and Uni studies here. Once I’d finished at CDU, I worked in a graduate program and got offered a permanent teaching position at Alawa Primary School within a couple of weeks. I’ve been teaching grades three and four there for two years now and love it.’ Randal was born and raised in Darwin, completing his first degree at CDU in 2003. He then moved to Brisbane to complete his Bachelor of Architecture. ‘Dad, originally from England, moved to Darwin in 1972

and Mum’s from Thailand. Dad was a meteorologist and was working in Antarctica when Cyclone Tracy hit,’ he explains. ‘Although I spent five years working and studying in Brisbane it never really felt like home, the Territory was always calling. A year after completing my degree I returned to Darwin. I haven’t looked back since.’ Life was easy during their first year together. Randal and Olivia had plenty of time to spend together, go out and every few weeks have a little break somewhere. Then Randal started his own architectural business. ‘I went from holidaying every few weeks to working from 3am daily,’ he explains. ‘I’ve always been a confident architect, but running a business, managing staff, paying them, bookkeeping – it was a completely different ball game. Thankfully Olivia helped out in the office and in building the foundations of the company.’ ‘Randal always dreams big. He’s out there to change the world. He was always going to do his own thing. He’s got so many plans and visions for Darwin,’ she smiles. ‘It means more to him, and he’s more invested having grown up here.’ Within a year of starting the business, Darwin’s building industry began its decline. ‘Our work was mostly residential housing, or with developers then, I had to refocus,’ he advises. ‘Now it’s more commercial and Government design and construction fit-outs. I’ve worked as part of the urban design panel for the Palmerston CBD Masterplan and assisted with Darwin CBD Masterplan. I would love to see a green tropical city with tree-lined streets and strong connections. We also should be utilising the Esplanade more with people using the space at night time like Cairns and Brisbane’s South Bank.’ Due to a family illness, Randal and Olivia fast-forwarded their wedding, marrying during Darwin’s peak wet season at Wharf One. ‘We were blown away by the professionalism and high standard that everyone provided. The food and services at the venue, incredible flower arrangements by the amazing Pippa Ainsworth, the delicious

cake made by Sweet Brew — everything was exceptional and all local,’ beamed Olivia. ‘There was no way we could have thrown a wedding together in the short five weeks in any other location other than Darwin. It was amazing.’ ‘Everything about our wedding was local including all outfits. Before the wedding we discussed how important it is to support local,’ adds Randal. ‘Once you own a business, you know how much you rely on locals when times are tough. Even if it costs a little more, we’re always going to support locally.’ Randal and Olivia bought their residential block in Frances Park three years ago, and after 18 months working hard on the block together, they have just completed their dream home. ‘We believe if you have worked hard to get there, you will always appreciate it that much more,’ they reminisce on the build. ‘Both our parents are proud of what we’ve achieved. Once we are fully settled we’ll begin planning our family,’ admits Olivia. ‘The house has been planned around them. I want two.’ Randal quickly says three. ‘Only if the third is adopted,’ she adds. ‘Adopted children need a lot of love, and we have a lot of love to give.’ They both agree on this. ‘I come from a family of three and want two children. Randal comes from a family of two and wants three,’ she laughs. ‘Darwin’s a great place to raise a family. Everyone’s so welcoming, open and friendly. Darwin still has that small town feel. It’s great.’ The Northern Territory is the land of opportunity. It was for my family and me.’ ‘We love promoting Darwin to everyone too. It’s unlike any other capital city, the lifestyle is unique, and full of opportunities,’ adds Randal. ‘It’s the ideal place to establish your career. I have achieved more in the ten years since returning home than I would have in 15 to 20 years had I stayed in Brisbane or any other city. If you’re willing to work hard, there is no limit to what the Territory has to offer.’

Turn to page 254 to see Randal and Olivia’s stunning home for our Resident cover feature.