

MELANIE'S TAKING ON NEW HEIGHTS

BY NANNETTE HOLLIDAY

Life changed for then 23-year-old Melanie Lewis in 2003.

She had followed a navy boy to Darwin.

“But instead, I fell in love with the town, the weather - I hate the cold - the fabulously friendly people and the opportunities afforded me here.”

Melanie is used to being the brand of her properties and is now moving up in the world (well Darwin) to the dizzy heights of Ramada Suites Zen Quarter as General Manager.

She doubts she would have got the opportunities to progress so quickly in the hospitality industry if she had stayed in Coffs Harbour.

“Someone would have had to die to get a GM's role,” she joked. “The Territory's opportunities are second to none if you put in the hard work and effort.”

Melanie, who is Accor-trained with a Bachelor of Business in Hotel and Catering Management, applied for the Assistant Managers position at the Saville Hotel, now Mantra on the Esplanade, while on holiday in 2003.

“I'd just returned to Coffs Harbour when they called telling me the good news.”

Two weeks later, Melanie settled into Darwin work and life.

The following 18 years have granted her many opportunities - from Manager on Duty at Darwin Central, Front Office Manager and Acting General Manager at FreeSpirit Resort, the last 13 years as General Manager of Palms City Resort, where she won five Brolga Awards five years running, and now General Manager at Zen.

“I found my zen at Zen. It's not your ordinary run-of-the-mill hotel - it's homely. And was mine for four months last year. The pool is divine. I started swimming again. It de-stressed and rejuvenated me in ways I never thought possible.”

Zen Quarter, built and owned by the Territory's Anthony family, has 218 one and two-bedroom balcony



suites, a 28-metre temperature-controlled infinity pool and Penthouse Lounge function area with 360-degree views of Darwin.

Melanie is excited about working with a family that is constantly investing in the Territory and the industry.

In March, they opened Capitanos - totally refurbishing the former Darwin Motor Inn and extending the pool to create a new mid-range accommodation option in Darwin.

Melanie's commitments run deep within the Territory's tourism sector. Since 2016, she has been Vice-Chair of Tourism Top End and Chair of the Membership Committee, plus she has been involved in Skal International Darwin for more than a decade and is the organisation's immediate Past-President.

Her management style allows her staff to interact with her all day, every day. Having maintained a solid team with almost zero staff turnover during the last 13 years speaks volumes.

During her first year at Zen, Melanie's focussed on the local and domestic leisure market.

“We'll also be looking to collaborate with local businesses, creating packages that haven't been seen previously in this market,” she says.

“Doing business in the Territory is different. We need to all work together to promote and grow the Territory.

“I'm looking forward to working with the family owners and putting my flair into making Zen Quarter even better than it already is, providing much more for locals and guests.”

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