

Ride of our lives!

WRITTEN
BY OUR
READERS

Ready for a new challenge, **Bev Brown** and her husband **Doug** decided to tackle their mid-life crisis head-on by embracing a new life for their family Down Under

Within the first few months of the new year, one friend announced her separation after 20 years of marriage, another that the gloves were off in her impending divorce, my brother quit his office job and became a teacher while other friends had affairs or "last minute" babies.

It seemed that the ones that were still together or not up to their ears in nappies were all so miserable and disenchanted with their lot – myself one of them. I soon got to thinking, "We've got the kids, the nice house, the mortgage, is this it?"

My hubby Doug, an IT architect, and I, a full-time mum, are 40-somethings now. We've done the sex, drugs and rock'n'roll (some of us more than others!) and we've even seen a bit of the world (ditto). But is it all downhill to our dotage now? Do we just sit back, waiting for next year's holiday, watching our children, Charlie, 10, and Jack, 4, living their lives vicariously and wishing?

Let me, like Julie Andrews, start at the very beginning. I've wanted to live in Oz for years. Being a shallow, vacuous person who loves good weather and can't see the point in learning another language because everyone else can speak English (and it would be very selfish not to let them practise it), my main priorities for destinations were somewhere hot and sunny, English-speaking, with work, and good beaches and schools close to hand.



Above A family snap in front of our scary "to do" list!

Left The Christmas card we sent out last year

CAMPAIGNING BEGINS

Doug was never totally against the idea but still managed to think up plenty of reasons for not doing it; such as the upset it would cause our parents, the trauma of moving our children from everything that was familiar to them, and the not inconsiderable size of the bugs out there! But I wasn't about to let little things stop me, or even big, hairy, poisonous things for that matter.

And so began my campaign – like water dripping on stone – slow, subtle, but always relentless. Casual comments about life in England, the rat race, teenage culture (we have a 10-year-old – far too close for

comfort) and, of course, the weather (do not get me started on the fiasco that was the "summer" of 2007). Australian real estate websites suddenly appeared amongst our web 'Favourites'; fabulous houses with pools, or webcams showing turquoise seas and sensational sunsets – you get the picture.

And, like other great forces of nature, a woman's sheer bloody mindedness usually wins through – or does a man just agree to anything for a quiet life? Who knows? It's a whole different sex. Anyway, he finally gave in! (Many thanks to the nice people who write the MODL list for adding his computer language skill – this might have helped somewhat.)

We found an agent in Sydney – Peter Chiam from Ptlabs Consulting, <http://ptlabs.com.au>



Photo: Shutterstock

who specialises in helping IT Professionals emigrate to Australia, and who never seems to sleep, always answering emails implausibly quickly. Between the two of them, they got through the whole daunting skills assessment and we were awarded the points we needed.

A few months later our visa was granted – the Golden Ticket, the green light, all systems go, chocks away chaps!

STEP CLOSER

I began surfing the internet and chose which climate, which city and which suburbs looked right. We know as much as is possible to know, when you're 16,000 kilometres away, about schools, their catchments, uniforms and curriculum. I've even Google Earthed the Ikea.

Reactions seem to fall into two camps; either "Bloody good luck to you" or "Are you totally barking?" Usually the latter.

We've never been to Oz before, have no family there and even though we're renting our house out for at least a year – many still think we're two sausages short of a barbie.

We say "We're dipping our toes into the water to see what bites us" – they say "Probably something big and deadly." We say "It'll be a great adventure and if we do come back, at least we'll know" – and that usually shuts them up.

One Tuesday night last April I read that, at the dreaded medical, some overweight people are required to have more tests done. Wednesday morning, I began losing the weight I'd accumulated for years. I'm now 21 kilos lighter, and when I turned up at our medicals in size 12 jeans, I

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could move and breathe in them at the same time!

And how do we feel now we've taken the first steps on this great journey? For me, I'm like a child on Christmas Eve.

And even the stoical love of my life, whose dogged form-filling made this dream a big step closer to



Above Charlie and Jack enjoy their last Christmas in the UK with cousin Lauren

a reality, has little frissons of excitement at the possibilities ahead.

We feel totally rejuvenated – knowing we have a whole new life ahead of us, not just more of the same. I hope the second half of our lives will be bigger, brighter, new and improved – so bring it on!

The date is set. We fly out of England on 4 October, do a three-day stopover in Singapore, then land in Perth. We are planning to live in the Iluka/Ocean Reef area in the northern suburbs of Perth.

As Tom Hanks' ticket inspector says at the end of *The Polar Express* (we have a train-obsessed four-year-old son), "It doesn't matter where you're going, what's important is deciding to get on." Welcome to my midlife crisis – climb on board, it's going to be a fun ride! 🇦🇺

Top We decided to live in the northern suburbs of Perth