

country change

INSPIRING AUSTRALIAN LIFESTYLES **RIVERINA**



live the dream!
THE RIVERINA AND ITS PEOPLE

Your guide to the ultimate **Country Change**



the region

THE RIVERINA IS A VIBRANT, AGRICULTURAL REGION IN SOUTH-WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES, COVERING AN AREA OF 80,545KM².





why Country Change, why the Riverina?

When did Australians start thinking about making a sea

or a tree change? It's twenty years since the award-winning television show starring Sigrid Thornton and David Wenham aired. Is that what piqued Australia's interest? Sitting in traffic for hours on end would have to be a motivation. Likewise, the difficulty in buying that Australian dream, your own home in our capital cities. But is this enough? The Riverina, equidistant from Sydney and Melbourne, with regular daily flights and good road access to the cities, means visiting the city for work or pleasure is easy. The Riverina has great schools, varied landscapes, town and city sizes and housing options. It has a wonderful arts scene, shopping (large and boutique), coffee shops and restaurants, with more emerging all the time. The liveability is enhanced with opportunities for walking, cycling, running, equestrian and all the traditional team sports, right on your doorstep. After making the move to the Riverina myself four years ago, I can only say, what's stopping you? Make your own 'C' change with Country Change Riverina and discover what our cities, towns and villages have to offer.

Rachel Whiting

CEO and Director of Regional Development, Regional Development Australia Riverina

why would I go back?

My wife and I moved to the Riverina from Sydney in the late 90s chasing my dream of starting a business. We have raised our family here and built a wonderful life with many friends, great lifestyle and involvement in the community.



Starting a business in a regional centre over 20 years ago provided opportunities that I otherwise would not have had in a metropolitan area/capital city.

Having now sold that business, I would never move back to Sydney. Though I enjoy visiting my old town, I love coming home to the Riverina. A country change means different things to different people. Some might move for a career or business opportunity, others for family life, or to slow down and enjoy retirement. All are achievable here.

Consider the Riverina as the place to make a country change happen for you.

Richard Allsopp

Chair, Regional Development Australia Riverina

COVER IMAGE: MANDOLÉ ALMOND ORCHARD IN GRIFFITH BY KARLY SIVEWRIGHT.
FAR LEFT: NATURE FARM LANDS, LOCKHART. THIS PAGE FROM TOP LEFT: LOCAL PRODUCE FROM NEST CINEMA CAFE AND BOOKS GARDEN, TUMBARUMBA; ON THE BANKS OF THE MURRAY RIVER AT JINGELLIC.



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ABOVE: COOLAMON KIDS.



Australian innovation in the heart of the Riverina

Step inside Charles Sturt University's world-class research and business park and discover what's possible.

Nestled in one of Australia's most thriving regional locations is an innovation centre like no other. The Charles Sturt University Agrisciences Research and Business Park (AgriPark) is dedicated to research, industry collaboration and sustainable production. The world-class facilities include diagnostic and research labs, Australia's largest soil water research facility, a state-of-the-art research winery, large and small animal hospitals, and a 1600Ha commercial farm.

Leading partnerships include AgriFutures Australia, Grains Research and Development Corporation, Syngenta Seedcare Institute, Regional Development Australia, Riverina Local Land Services, Eurofins Agrosience Services, Bridge Hub and Hutcheon & Pearce.

Our investment in infrastructure and Australia's brightest and most inquiring minds is at your fingertips. Whether you're a startup looking to test a new idea, a larger corporation seeking access to innovation, a business wanting to deliver solutions to industry challenges, or an industry body looking to improve value chain productivity, we're here to help.

Collaborate, collocate and create with AgriPark. Let's discuss your unique business needs today.

Call Matt Cahill on 0408 063 138 or email agripark@csu.edu.au

“

Relocating to the Wagga Wagga campus was a smart move for RDA Riverina. We are situated among some of the biggest players in local and national industry. We have recently partnered with Charles Sturt University on some vital research for our region – just part and parcel of being an AgriPark partner.

”

Rachel Whiting

CEO and Director of Regional Development, Regional Development Australia (RDA) Riverina

AGRIPARK

agripark.csu.edu.au



Taste Riverina



Taste Riverina



Destination NSW



Destination NSW

your future awaits

IF YOU'VE NOT VISITED THE RIVERINA BEFORE, THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE YOU HAVEN'T BEEN FULLY EXPOSED TO THE DIVERSITY OF THIS MAGNIFICENT REGION. AND EVEN IF YOU HAVE, YOU MOST LIKELY HAVEN'T SEEN ALL THERE IS ON OFFER - AND THAT'S NOT AN EXAGGERATION!

The Riverina is an agricultural region of south-western New South Wales. It extends from the foothills of the Snowy Mountains north-west, through the Murrumbidgee River catchment area, to the flat dry inland plains of Hay and Carrathool. It truly is a medley of landscapes and experiences.

The region covers an area of 80,545km² (bigger than the whole of Tasmania at 68,401km²!) with an estimated population of over 170,000 in 2019. It has two major inland cities - Wagga Wagga and Griffith. It also contains the local government areas of Bland, Carrathool, Coolamon, Cootamundra-Gundagai, Hay, Junee, Leeton, Lockhart, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera, Snowy Valleys and Temora. Each Shire, town and village providing something unique to the energy of the Riverina.

THE MIGHTY RIVER & BURGEONING FOOD SCENE

The mighty Murrumbidgee River runs through the Riverina region and delivers water to major food-producing areas of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) and Coleambally Irrigation Area (CIA). These irrigation areas provide over one-quarter of all the fruit and vegetable production in NSW and combined are one of Australia's largest exporters of bulk wines. Further growth in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is being experienced in cotton, aquaculture, and nut industries.

The Riverina's burgeoning food scene currently presents numerous opportunities for businesses. The diversity of the produce grown in the area is unmatched and has enhanced the attractiveness of the region. Whether it's a paddock-to-plate experience, glamorous wedding facilities or a delicious wine tasting adventure you seek, the Riverina is the ultimate gracious host.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: FARMER, JOHN HARPER, HERDING SHEEP IN TEMORA; TASTE RIVERINA LUNCH; TUMUT'S RIVER WALK IN AUTUMN; WINE TASTING AT JOHANSEN WINES IN TUMBARUMBA; BERTOLDOS BAKERY, GRIFFITH; LIFE ON THE LAND IN LEETON SHIRE.

It's also home to a strong education base including Charles Sturt University, TAFE NSW, RAAF Base Forest Hill, and the Kapooka Army Base. All of these facilities are vital in helping build the skills and confidence of the community.

The Riverina is brimming with proactive and entrepreneurial-minded people. Opportunities for development exist in agriculture, aged care, defence, manufacturing, wood products, transport & logistics and education. The demand for skilled workers across a multitude of trades and professions is growing with its population.

GROWING MINDS

If you're concerned about the variety and quality of educational opportunities available with a move to the country - you shouldn't be. The Riverina has over 150 schools and 14 Higher Educational and Vocational Training facilities. Most towns have at least one public and one private school to choose from. With over 30,000 school students across the Riverina, the kids will make plenty of friends.

When school is finished, you want to be sure that your kids can continue their education without leaving for the big cities. Charles Sturt University has a large campus in Wagga Wagga and Albury-Wodonga. TAFE NSW has facilities in Wagga Wagga, Temora, Tumut, Narrandera, Leeton, Hay, Griffith, Cootamundra and West Wyalong. Western Riverina Community College has campuses in Leeton and Griffith, and there is a Riverina Community College in Wagga Wagga and a Tocal College campus in Yanco.

NURTURING BODIES

Part of the Murrumbidgee Local Health District, a wide range of public and private medical and allied health services are carried out across the region including some of the smaller communities where telehealth is used to link with specialists.

Thanks to generous government investment, Riverina residents have access to a great range of medical facilities and they continue to improve. Delivered in 3 stages, the NSW Government is investing over \$431 million in the Wagga Wagga Health Service Redevelopment. Griffith, Tumut, Tumbarumba and Temora are among the list for a whole range of public and private medical and allied health services.

STAYING ENGAGED

Apart from the developing and vibrant economies, the region offers a diverse range of facilities, services and lifestyle options that are attractive to many seeking a tree change. With major inland cities on your doorstep and direct transit links to Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne, Country Changers get the best of all worlds. Whether you choose to work remotely, commute, or start your own venture, low overheads and access ensure your career and dreams collide in your new home.

Combine that with the legendary Australian country spirit, affordable housing and a good work/life balance, you're bound to quickly feel right at home.

But don't just take our word for it, keep exploring the Riverina to make it part of your future!



welcome to country

THE HISTORY OF THE
RIVERINA STRETCHES
FAR BEYOND WHITE
SETTLEMENT.

Photo: Supplied by City of Wagga Wagga

For tens of thousands of years, Aboriginal people have called this region home, with large Aboriginal communities living on the Hay Plain and around the Lachlan, Macquarie, Murrumbidgee and Murray rivers.

Part of the oldest living culture in the world and geographically the largest Indigenous nation within NSW, the Wiradjuri Nation extends from Coonabarabran in the north, straddling the Great Dividing Range down to the Murray River and out to western NSW.

Wiradjuri country includes the townships of Wagga Wagga, Albury, Narrandera, and Griffith and when travelling around the region today, you can see many places significant to Wiradjuri people and their heritage.

Aboriginal tours operate across the Riverina. Contact your local visitor information centre or local council for more information.

These include:

The Tumut River - once the meeting place for Aboriginal tribes including the Wiradjuri, Ngungawal and Wolgalu

Marrambidya Wetland - a stunning 20-hectare reserve located alongside the Murrumbidgee River just minutes from the Wagga Wagga CBD (pictured)

Bomen Axe Quarry - a site where stone axes were manufactured, which gives us insights into Wiradjuri stone technology, Aboriginal trade routes and land management practices

Kengal/The Rock - a Dreaming place, lookout and ceremonial site for Wiradjuri people

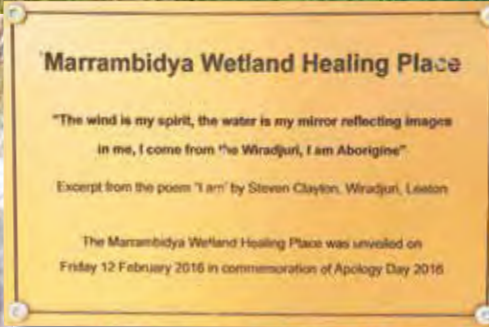
Cocoparra National Park near Yenda - an area used intensively in winter and spring when food sources became scarce along rivers. The name Cocoparra comes from 'cocupara' or kookaburra.



Photo: City of Wagga Wagga



Photo: City of Wagga Wagga



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT:
 REEDS AT MARRAMBIDYA WETLANDS, WAGGA WAGGA; MARRAMBIDYA WETLAND HEALING PLACE, WAGGA WAGGA; BIRD TRACKS AT MARRAMBIDYA WETLANDS, WAGGA WAGGA; CORROBOREE WAGGA WAGGA NGULANGUMBILANHA 'RETURNING HOME TO A SACRED GATHERING PLACE', 2019; CHILDREN DANCING AT WAGGA WAGGA CORROBOREE, 2019.



Photo: City of Wagga Wagga



Photo: Lisa Saffrey

ALTOGETHER, COME HERE

Aunty Isabel Reid, Wiradjuri Elder in Wagga Wagga explains that Mawang Gaway, Wiradjuri for 'Altogether come here', is a phrase that shows all voices are welcome and it is important to hear from everyone who lives in this community.

"Wiradjuri people are welcoming. We know white people have been living here for a long time and this is their home. But this land belongs to our people. That will never change."

Aunty Isabel explains that having a Welcome to Country is both customary Lore and a significant Aboriginal protocol which is widely practised across the Riverina today at community gatherings.

In traditional Aboriginal societies, different clans would seek permission to enter, travel and to sometimes trade and

participate in significant sacred ceremonies with neighbouring language groups.

Today, appropriate Custodial Elders will Welcome and Acknowledge Country as a sign of respect to Elders past and present. It is a traditional cultural practice to recognise the connection with spiritual ancestors and is an ancient practice that has taken place for more than 60,000 years.

"A Welcome to Country that comes from the heart is meaningful and it does a lot to bring people together. If you move here and have a function of some sort, a Welcome to Country is very necessary. People need to be welcomed onto the land."

Thanks to Aunty Isabel Reid and the Mawang Gaway Aboriginal Consultative Group, Wagga Wagga, for information on Aboriginal community protocols.



the Riverina way of life

SPACE, TIME AND STRESS-FREE MORTGAGES

What makes a house a home for you? Is it the kitchen that allows you to make nutritious meals for family and friends? A large backyard for a swing set or dog kennel? Perhaps it is the cosiness of your four walls, littered with art with a view for days?

Beyond the walls, the outside world also impacts our home life. Noise, congestion, access to services, proximity to loved ones, work and nature - we all have a list of priorities important to us when weighing up where to live. A significant factor for most is, of course, cost.

It's no secret that the cost of living in metro areas can be double the cost of living in regional Australia – sometimes more. But it's not until after people make their country change that they realise city life was costing them far more than just money.

Whether it's crippling mortgages, stressful commutes to work and the overall pressure of city life, the concrete jungle can leave people feeling trapped and disconnected.

The reality is – it doesn't have to be this way. You work hard, and you deserve to enjoy the fruits of your labour. You can have a spacious family home with a stress-free mortgage AND have the time and energy to enjoy it as well.

The lack of personal time and the sense of community which can be lost through the struggles to afford city living, are not only detrimental to your health and wellbeing but are also avoidable. Deep down, we all know this, but for some of us, the payoffs for city living are worth it. On the other hand, many of us know we'd be happier and healthier if we made the move - but have you ever actually crunched the numbers?

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the mean price of residential dwellings across the eight capital cities in 2020 is \$690,000.

Check out the Riverina by comparison in the table following:



Photo: Ginette Guidolin



Photo: Anne Cooper

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: GATE LANDSCAPE SUNSET IN NARRANDERA; GRIFFITH'S TREE LINED STREETS BACKING ONTO TO SCENIC HILL; THE DEATON FAMILY ENJOYING THE CYCLEWAYS AROUND LEETON; SAM RICHARDS AT HOME AT THE TEMORA AIRPARK ESTATE; FAMILY TIME IN GUNDAGAI.

LGA	MEDIAN SALE PRICE (\$)	RENT/WK (\$)
BLAND	255,000	200
CARRATHOOL	120,000	238
COOLAMON	292,000	280
COOTAMUNDRA-GUNDAGAI	300,000	250
GREATER HUME	235,000	270
GRIFFITH	340,853	350
HAY	142,000	190
JUNEE	302,000	270
LEETON	255,000	260
LOCKHART	281,000	150
MURRUMBIDGEE	175,000	230
NARRANDERA	254,500	230
SNOWY VALLEYS	250,000	250
TEMORA	292,000	280
WAGGA WAGGA	347,728	340
GREATER METROPOLITAN REGION (SYDNEY)	775,000	510
REST OF THE STATE	429,000	350
NSW	680,000	480

The median house prices across the region range between \$120,000 to \$347,000. The Riverina property market is full of gorgeous homes with big backyards for less than \$400,000. In some areas, \$250,000 you can get a renovated 3-bedroom historical home, full of character and charm! If living in town isn't your desire, try a hobby farm or larger agricultural parcel. Build, renovate or buy as-is – the best thing about buying in regional areas is that you have so many options – it's your future, you decide!

Parking won't be a battle, access to amenities isn't an issue, and to top it all off, your family can enjoy amazing views of the countryside – because unlike city living, Riverina convenience and affordability don't require you to forgo picturesque surroundings.

When you buy a home in the Riverina, you're actually getting a lot more for your money than just a nice house to live in. What you're really investing in is a lifestyle. You're buying a place for your family in a thriving and supportive community; you're buying the opportunity to start that business you've been thinking about for years; you're paying to trade in your long commute in peak hour traffic for an energising walk or ride into work; you're affording a life with less stress and more free time.

Affordable and spacious homes, with stress-free mortgages, are just another part of the whole Riverina way of life.



Photo: Anne Cooper



Photo: Destination NSW



why the Riverina is crying out for the skilled

IT'S ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PERCEIVED LIMITING FACTORS TO PEOPLE MOVING TO THE COUNTRY – EMPLOYMENT.

Questions like, “Are there any jobs in regional Australia? Will my career suffer moving to the country? Can we afford a tree change?”

The combination of being overworked, overstretched and undervalued is a terrible feeling. Sadly, it’s a common experience for hard-working city folk. The good news is, you’re not trapped; there is a way out. Not only is the Riverina a great place to live and play, but it’s also a great place to work and even grow your career, quicker - you may even be able to take your job with you!

Despite common misconceptions, there’s no shortage of opportunities in our thriving region. The Riverina is growing fast, and so is the need for skilled workers across a broad range of industries not generally associated with the country.

“Businesses need adaptable people. People who are multi-skilled but also willing to broaden their minds and skill-sets,”

said Rachel Whiting, CEO of Regional Development Australia Riverina.

Statistics reveal businesses are trying harder than ever to fill these positions. Data available from the Labour Market Information Portal shows the internet vacancy rate for the Riverina-Murray region has increased by nearly 90% over the past nine years. According to the Small Area Labour Markets Publication, over the last five years, the Riverina has had an annual average unemployment rate of 4.4%. That’s partly thanks to the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry sector which is the region’s largest employer with almost 10,000 jobs. Healthcare and Social Assistance follow this with 9,600 jobs.

There is currently a strong demand for skilled workers with an anticipated shortage of over 7,700, forecast over the next three-to-four years due to industry and population growth, along with an ageing workforce. There is also a great need for more skills sets such as welders, electricians, veterinarians, farmers,



Photo: K. Mitsch



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: COFFEE CATCHUPS AT LIMONE; NICK WILLS, RESIDENT OF TEMORA AIRPARK ESTATE; HARVESTING CEREAL CROPS IS A COMMON SIGHT IN SUMMER ACROSS GREATER HUME; NARRANDERA HOSPITAL X-RAY CLINIC; WANDERING THROUGH VINEYARD AT COURABYRA WINES, TUMBARUMBA; PREPARING FRESH PASTA AT ZECCA; VISITORS ENJOYING A BREWERY TOUR AT TUMUT RIVER BREWING CO, TUMUT.

business analysts and engineers (electrical, mechanical, industrial and civil) to name just a few.

“By 2022, the region’s population is expected to increase by an estimated 10,000 people. We desperately need higher skilled people (Degree or higher) as well as tradespeople like plumbers, welders and electricians,” said Ms Whiting.

The Riverina is also a great place to launch a career and propel through the ranks faster, she said. With businesses providing more opportunities for growth, exposure and responsibilities, than the city workplaces.

“You have to wear so many more ‘job hats’ in the country. If you’re prepared to have your area of expertise but also step outside of it, the Riverina is an excellent place for career growth. Not every significant career starts in Sydney or Melbourne.”

On top of this, Ms Whiting explains that many ‘Country Changers’ are bringing their jobs with them from the city.

“Thanks to great internet and transit connections, we are seeing many city-based businesses allowing people to work remotely. These factors allow families to make their tree change a lot sooner and with peace of mind.”

As a great place to live, work and play, the Riverina continues to blossom and bloom. The only question is, are you ready to make the change? If so, you might want to check out the Jobs Riverina website (jobsriverina.com.au), which lists hundreds of jobs across the region in numerous industries.

The free online platform helps businesses and potential employers find each other, but it also provides a range of other benefits. For example, you can upload your resume through the AirCV to make yourself visible to businesses seeking skilled workers. It also allows you to set up notifications for new jobs.

“This is a new platform, but the total number of notice views has more than quadrupled the past 12 months, again demonstrating the need of employers in our region,” said Ms Whiting.

With several incentives and campaigns attracting people to the Riverina, the future for the Riverina is not only bright, but it could also be your future.

“You have to wear so many more ‘job hats’ in the country. If you’re prepared to have your area of expertise but also step outside of it, the Riverina is an excellent place for career growth. Not every significant career starts in Sydney or Melbourne.”



the advantages of raising your kids in a country town



AS A PARENT, YOU WANT TO DO AS MUCH AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE TO RAISE WONDERFUL ADULTS THAT ARE BALANCED, WELL-EDUCATED AND EMPATHETIC. YOU WORRY ABOUT BAD INFLUENCES, GIVING THEM ENOUGH OF YOUR TIME AND SENDING THEM TO THE RIGHT SCHOOL.

With so much to weigh-up and consider as a parent, it's not surprising that one of the first questions people ask before they make a tree change is, "What are the schools and teachers like?"

This was also a consideration for now married Coolamon school teachers, Kaarin (28) and Thomas Besgrove (28). Not only did they fall in love with each other the first year they started teaching at Coolamon Central School, but they also fell in love with the community and all the opportunities afforded to their kids.

"I couldn't think of a better place to raise a family – to know there is the support and community that cares, means the world to us," said Kaarin who teaches Kindergarten to year 12, and offers Career Support.

While Kaarin grew up in Coolamon Shire, she went to Charles Sturt University in neighbouring regional cities, Wagga Wagga and Albury. She jumped at the chance to return home for a permanent job, knowing the pathways the local schools provide.

"I honestly can't think of many disadvantages. You can access Melbourne and Sydney easily (both are around 450Kms away) and the schools' access to resources and technology is phenomenal," she said.

"There are 20 pupils in each class, so we know every kid in the school. We know their story and what's going on at home. The relationships you develop, well, you don't get them in a bigger city school."

Husband Thomas, who teaches Year 7-12 Personal Development, Health and Physical Education, moved from Dunedoo, loves the town but admits his first week wasn't quite what he expected.

"My initial thoughts were 'What have I done?' But as soon as I turned onto the main street, it didn't take me long at all to get into the swing of things. It also helped that I met my future wife the first day on the job," he laughed.

He has also been blown away by the career and learning pathways that the shire population of 4,500 people offers. "There's nothing we don't have. For example, we have a set of 20-30 laptops between every second classroom," he said.

"On top of that, we have a deep understanding and link to



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: KAARIN AND THOMAS BESGROVE WITH 14 MONTH OLD HUGO; HARVEST AT SUNSET; KELPIE PUPPY ON FARMERS UTE; ENTRANCE TO THE COOLAMON UP-TO-DATE STORE; STORMY CLOUDS OVER PADDOCKS; PICKING LEMONS; FLOWERING CANOLA FIELDS IN SPRING; THE COUPLE ARE ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY AND RUN A SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMME CALLED MUSIC FOR MATES.

the community and businesses that open up meaningful connections and opportunities. One teacher recently organised a volunteering block for 8-10 kids who went to an aged care facility and spent time with the residents. There is now the opportunity for those relationships to continue because of our small tightknit community. In larger school settings it can be easier to fall between the cracks because they don't have that connection and close relationships," said Thomas.

"We're also close to regional major centres. With Wagga Wagga less than 30 minutes down the road, we can organise workplace opportunities for students."

These also extend to careers outside of agriculture, he stressed. "There is tremendous flexibility and tailored learning for students who want to access a particular subject that isn't offered at the school. Schools go out

LOCAL LIFE COOLAMON SHIRE



Photo: Emily Humphrey



Photo: Sarah Boyle



Photo: Georgina Boyle



Photo: Alicia Somerville

of their way to get the student access whether it be through online learning through other institutions or TAFE,” Thomas added.

Beyond the access to schools, access to other services either in the town or close by means that they want for nothing.

“Some people could think that in a small town you’re sheltered and live in a fishbowl but Coolamon is not like that. Wagga, Canberra and Melbourne are close so you get to give your kids a taste of everything. We can take the kids to Canberra to watch the League or Melbourne to watch the AFL,” Thomas said.

The cost of living has allowed the couple who are expecting their second child next year, to prepare for their expanding family. “We are building our dream house with four bedrooms, a study and two bathrooms. It’s a huge block, just under half an acre in a new estate in town,” said Kaarin excitedly.

Both are also active community members. As well as playing for the local AFL and netball teams, they launched Music for Mates, a suicide prevention program.

“We started Music for Mates in 2014 and run a range of events, concerts and free mental health courses for young people in our rural communities. It’s our baby and passion project. Something that is really close to our hearts,” Kaarin confided.

“Some of the things I love most is the community and parks. The first week I was here people were saying hello and welcoming me, asking me where I was from.”

And his wife agrees.

“You really do get the best of both worlds here. My advice is to give it a go because you never know what it is going to be like if you don’t try. And you can always go back... but come and get a feel for our town because you will fall in love with Coolamon!

LIVING & HOUSING

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE

\$292,000

RENT AVERAGE

THREE BEDROOM HOUSE

\$280 PW

SHIRE POPULATION

4500

CLIMATE

SUMMER 15C - 40C

WINTER 1C - 14C





welcoming generations of families and businesses

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: FAMILY TIME IN GUNDAGAI; NINA, LUKE AND AUSTIN PIOTROWICZ; CANOLA FIELD NEAR COOTAMUNDRA; GUNDAGAI RAILWAY STATION; FISHING IN MORLEY CREEK.

COOTAMUNDRA-GUNDAGAI - WHERE YOU CAN HAVE A LIFE, NOT JUST EARN A LIVING.

Originally based in Canberra, Nina and Luke Piotrowicz had built themselves a good life in the nation's capital, taking advantage of everything the city offered. But after a time, the high mortgage, ever-increasing fees and continual parking charges began to overtake the enjoyment of the parks and attractions. "It just wasn't fun anymore," admits Nina.

When an opportunity to invest in a property in Cootamundra arose, they took it, never suspecting what it might lead to. Almost a century old, the beautiful building needed work. Renovation being something the couple had always wanted to do, they took the project on with enthusiasm.

Nina and Luke found themselves making the two-hour trip from Canberra to Cootamundra quite regularly. As work progressed, they began to get a real feel for the town.

Nearly 100 years old, Nina and Luke's renovated commercial property in Cootamundra looks set to welcome many generations of businesses to come.

Becoming ever more unsettled with city life, the overwhelmingly positive experiences the couple had in this regional town began to tip the scales. Having previously thought about buying land within a two-hour radius of Canberra, they decided to start looking again at opportunities for a Country Change. And they couldn't look past the Shire of Cootamundra-Gundagai.

The regional area of Cootamundra-Gundagai has a community of approximately 11,500 people. This includes residents of the two main towns of Cootamundra and Gundagai, as well

as the villages of Adjungbilly, Coolac, Muttama, Nangus, Stockinbinal, Tumblong and Wallendbeen.

With great schools in the region, Luke, who was originally trained as a secondary and special education teacher, was able to take casual and contract teaching positions. Nina, an administrative and project coordinator for a large, national professional association, needed to create a flexible plan with her employer. At first, her company was concerned with how she could retain her role, but Nina has created a successful, flexible approach.

The lack of shopping and social life are just some of the misconceptions about living in regional towns they've busted since their move. "It took a long time to settle in and meet people when I first got to Canberra. But here, rather quickly, we've made friends and have a good social circle. There are people here we know we can rely on and who know they can rely on us."

The family also quickly found groups and activities that were of interest for each of them. They have not only been able to try new things but have become involved in sectors of the community in ways they never had the opportunity to in the city. Luke even discovered that it was not just his family who appreciated his baking skills after he won first prize at the local show for a delicious banana cake.

Access to services isn't an issue either. "It is all very convenient. From where we are here, it's only 200 metres to a



pub that only sells craft beers. And not very much farther away, you have a choice of other pubs, an RSL, cafes, takeaways, supermarkets and the like. We would spend much longer in Canberra getting to where we wanted to go than we ever do here,” Luke tells us.

With a child in his early Primary school years, the couple has noted that there’s a lot to keep the younger generation occupied. Sports facilities, school and community activities are abundant and free to access. And with a TAFE college and Charles Sturt University in nearby Wagga, there are plenty of opportunities for recreation, education and jobs within the region.

“Young people seem to want to stay around. You don’t see them heading to the city at the first opportunity because there is not enough employment. That just doesn’t seem to be the case here,” Luke said, adding, “Things like apprenticeships, traineeships and courses from the local TAFE all seem to help people stay in the area. With so much farming, agriculture and local business commerce, there is a lot of opportunity for employment at any age here.”

For others considering a Country Change, the Piotrowicz’s recommend each family do their research. “Really understand what your family needs (now) and what it might need into the future, and then consider the towns that have these services. Go and visit. Stay for a few days or a week and talk to the locals,” advises Nina.

Luke also points out that, “While the house prices are great, and a huge drawcard to an area, there’s definitely more to a

Young people seem to want to stay around. You don’t see them heading to the city at the first opportunity because there is not enough employment.

place than just this.” The couple suggests visiting on regular days, not just holiday weekends or for festivals. They remind potential Country Changers to “take some time to visit the places you would go to if you did live there, not just the main attractions.”

Overwhelmingly, the move to Cootamundra has allowed Nina, Luke and their family “to have a life, not just earn a living.” They love the atmosphere of their small town and find it refreshing to see how much care and attention goes into its presentation year-round. “It looks beautiful. It looks loved, and we’re really happy to be a part of that,” added Nina.

LIVING & HOUSING

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE

\$300,000

RENT AVERAGE

\$250 PW

POPULATION

11500

CLIMATE

SUMMER 15C - 31C

WINTER 2C - 14C





Photo: Mark Jesser



happiness and horticulture in Holbrook

THE ROLLING GREEN HILLS, CLEAN AIR, THRIVING LIVESTOCK AND FLOURISHING CROPS IN THE TOWN OF HOLBROOK, IN THE RIVERINA'S **GREATER HUME**, TICKED ALL THE BOXES FOR TIM AND KELLY GLASS' COUNTRY CHANGE.

FROM CITY HUSTLE - TO LEAFY RUSTLE

After years of running on the corporate treadmill in Melbourne, the couple wanted more influence on their lifestyle and a more suitable future for their children. "Once we had our first child, it increased our focus to relocate to a region where we could utilise our education and expertise without the hustle and bustle of city life," Kelly explained.

With business and finance backgrounds and experience in agricultural companies, Tim and Kelly were attracted to the horticultural potential of Holbrook. The nursery and farm they now own appealed to them because of the diversity of income stream potentials it held and the liquidity of the property market in the area. "It's a region with strong demand," said Kelly, "hence the underlying support for property values."

GREAT OPPORTUNITIES IN GREATER HUME

With a population of just 1,715, the town of Holbrook, in the Greater Hume region, had just the right blend of remoteness

and access to facilities that the Glass family sought; with schools, sporting activities, parts availability, service providers and local employees all in the area.

Knowing they were looking for business opportunities within the agricultural sector, rainfall was a significant driver. Critical to success on the land, their research revealed that Holbrook had a consistent annual rainfall of around 28 inches. This factor made their purchase of **Jayfields Nursery** a reliable choice.

In under an hour, you can reach Albury to the south or Wagga Wagga to the north. However, given so much is available in their local area, the Glass family find themselves making these trips infrequently.

DIVERSITY DELIVERS FULFILMENT

The couple was aware of how easy it was to fall into a rut and fully appreciate the differences that each day now brings. Whether it be the extensive range of tasks necessary for their business, the changing seasons or the activities available for their children, the family is grateful for the diversity their Country Change has allowed them.



Photo: Mark Jesser



Photo: Glenys Baxter



Photo: Marg Killalea



Photo: K. Mitsch

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: CANOEING AND RIVER FISHING IS POPULAR AT EASTER IN GREATER HUME; THE GLASS FAMILY, JAYFIELDS NURSERY; JAYFIELDS NURSERY; MORGANS LOOKOUT, HOLBROOK; HARVESTING CEREAL CROPS IS A COMMON SIGHT IN SUMMER ACROSS GREATER HUME; LANKEYS CREEK COMMUNITY XMAS PARTY.

An essential factor of their move was to be able to raise their boys where they could play freely outdoors and gain an appreciation for nature, agriculture and wide-open spaces. Kelly noted, “We wanted the kids to develop the grounded demeanour and associated work ethic that rural living contributes to. And because we see them more [than they would have in the city], we have a direct impact on our future with every decision we make.”

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BENEFITS EVERYONE

Although the pair works as hard, if not harder, than they were in Melbourne, they have found the rewards of living in a smaller community to be broader and more fulfilling. “We are part of a small community that feels more engaged in contributing to a common positive outcome for our region and our kids.”

And the support of the community flows in all directions. “All of the community have been welcoming and willing to help us succeed,” she said. And with children involved in educational and sporting activities, there is no shortage of opportunities to engage with the community.

Tim and Kelly are a wealth of wisdom for others looking to make a Country Change, having done many years of research before making their move.

They suggest, for optimal success, people must be comfortable with the fact that assets may not be as liquid, especially if a business purchase is a part of their relocation. “Exiting your decision if you change your mind can take time,” Kelly cautioned, “But don’t be afraid to do your research, make informed choices and pivot if you need to. Be prepared to immerse yourself into the new lifestyle, and it will reward you.”

LIVING & HOUSING

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE

\$235,000

Source: for Dec. 2019 quarter, NSW Government Communities & Justice.

RENT AVERAGE

\$270 PW

SHIRE POPULATION

10764

Source: ABS Estimated Resident Population REPLAN

CLIMATE

SUMMER 12C - 30C

WINTER 0C - 15C





AFFORDING THE AUSTRALIAN DREAM

THE SURPRISING BENEFITS OF EMBRACING A COUNTRY CHANGE TO GRIFFITH

Meet one of Griffith's most passionate Country Changers, Annie Featherstone. Originally from South Africa, Annie is now a proud Griffith resident. Making her way from her home country to Sydney, she found that living in the Eastern Beaches was very much to her liking. She liked it so much that when her husband, a police officer, was transferred to the picturesque Riverina town of Griffith, she made him go on his own. After six months of living separately, they wondered if they had made the best choice.

"Essentially, I came against my will," quips Annie, after sheepishly admitting that she didn't know where the town was when the transfer was offered.

Her first visit to Griffith was on a scorching January day. The heat had clouded her perspective, and when she couldn't immediately spot a sizeable air-conditioned shopping mall, she wondered whether she could survive there.

When the couple found a great property to rent for half the price they were paying in Sydney, she began to rethink her initial reaction. Further exploration of the town did, in fact, reveal two air-conditioned shopping centres but also plenty of other shopping options and much more. The thriving wineries, arts, cultural and sporting options sparked memories of a childhood spent away from the cities.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Moving herself and their two children out of Sydney to join her husband became an exciting prospect. The range of schooling, extracurricular activities and housing helped cement the idea, and it wasn't long before Annie was wondering why she hadn't made the move sooner.

Buying a house with a large yard and swimming pool had been a pipedream for the family; however, this is precisely what they were able to do. With lower mortgage repayments than they had in the city, no less. "We really have been able to afford the Australian Dream," said Annie, "and we finally have enough space for a dog."



THRIVING ARTS, CULTURAL AND SPORTING COMMUNITIES

With so much going on in Griffith and other nearby Riverina towns, Annie and her family have not only had the chance to attend local festivals but have even been able to volunteer. "I was really amazed by the citrus sculptures the first time I saw them," recalled Annie. "It was wonderful to be involved and help out with the festival ourselves last year."

Although having loved city life, Annie explained that the family rarely had time to participate in external activities. The children had plenty of school-related things to do, and being busy, working parents, there was rarely time for non-essentials. In such a bustling urban area, even getting to a venue took a lot of time and patience, not to mention the additional expenditure on fees, parking, fuel and the like.

In Griffith, not only is everything nearby, the family now has time to be involved in their individual interests. The kids have had the chance to try many new things, and Annie herself has joined a netball team. "Netball is something I would never even have considered in Sydney. In 13 years there I didn't have a chance to play sport," she explained.



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: PICNIC AT THE WILLOWS; COTTON HARVEST; MUSIC AT THE SIKH TEMPLE; LOCAL VINEYARD; BANNA LANE STREET ART; MUSIC IN THE GARDEN; ALMOND ORCHARD; THE FEATHERSTONE FAMILY AT THE SPRING FESTIVAL GARDEN VISITS.



A WELCOMING SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Although working full time, Annie says the family has more quality time together than they ever had before. “Having the afternoons free with the girls is fantastic,” she reflected. “Their schools offer so many extracurricular activities and have been so welcoming and inclusive. Everyone feels like they have something to contribute.”

The quality of education was another thing that surprised Annie when she moved into the regional area. Having become accustomed to a large, busy school environment, she was pleased to find good ratios of teachers to students. “There was such a caring attitude about each child as well as their educational needs. The girls were buddied up when they first arrived, and that really helped them settle in.” She said that she too was made to feel welcome by the school and other parents, “It was a massive surprise and so different from Sydney. No one seemed anxious or rushed, and people made me feel included straight away.”

Schools have always been a place for parents to connect, but when people are stressed or rushed this connection seems to be the first to go. But in Griffith, it appears to be quite the opposite. “There is such a sense of community, and someone always reaches out if times are tough,” she said.

ADVICE FOR OTHER COUNTRY CHANGERS

A supportive community is one of the most repeated advantages Country Changers report of their regional towns, and this is undoubtedly the case in Griffith. Annie is enthusiastic in her advice for people considering a move to the country, “Not knowing about a place is the biggest problem,” she said. “Just go and visit all the places you’re thinking about living. Ask questions. People are not scared to share information. Everyone wants everyone else to succeed,” she insisted.

LIVING & HOUSING

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE

\$340,853
(id consulting 2018)

RENT AVERAGE

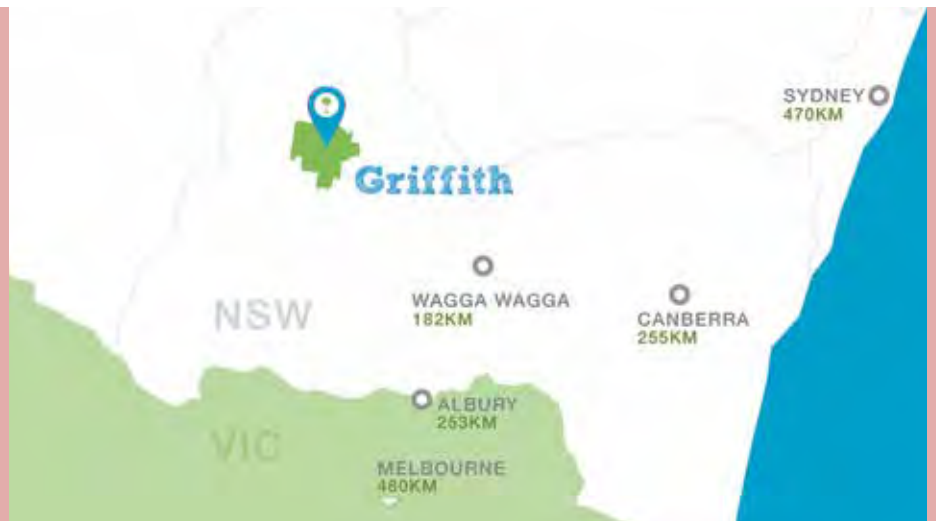
\$350 PW
(id consulting 2018)

SHIRE POPULATION

27029

CLIMATE

SUMMER 15C - 40C
WINTER 1C - 14C





a great place to stay



HOW TO MAKE A COUNTRY CHANGE, WORK

With a population of just over eleven-thousand, you might be tempted to think of this place as ‘just another country town’ to pass through on your way to somewhere else. But Leeton has plenty of reasons for you to stick around.

Wayne and Mia Bond liked this Riverina township so much they stayed. And as owners of the Leeton Heritage Motor Inn and Charley’s Bar and Grill, they invite you to stay too.

The couple met two and a half decades ago while working at a Salvation Army hostel.

“She said hello...”, Wayne said, “We went out... and the rest is history, so they say.” Their strong commitment to community kept them both working in Sydney for the Salvos, where they spent 10-12 more years in service.

The couple then moved to Toowoomba, Queensland, which is where they first started in the Motel business. They worked in several places in south-east Qld (Ipswich, Brisbane, Redcliffe) before the opportunity to run the Leeton Heritage Motor Inn came up. Ready for a new challenge, they took a drive to Leeton to get a feel for the place.

Their first thoughts were, “This looks like a great motel, a great business and a great town.” And it turns out that Leeton is all of those things and more. People are genuinely friendly and welcoming. “We really like the country lifestyle. You have clean country air, so you can get out and you can go for a walk without smog. There are sports clubs, gyms, restaurants, hotels and bars, an RSL club, and shops, little novelty sort of shops that you wouldn’t find in most places with gifts and clothes and those sort of things.”

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: AUTUMN TREES; HOT AIR BALLOONS; SOUTHERN COTTON; SUNSET AT MCCAUGHEY PARK; MCCAUGHEY MANSION AT YANCO AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL; ROXY THEATRE; ORANGE ORCHARD; LEETON FOOD GUIDE LAUNCH MARCH 2019, WAYNE BOND, MAYOR PAUL MAYTOM AND VANESSA PAGES; WAYNE AND MIA BOND.





“It’s more peaceful, you get to know people better. For a work environment, and for families as well, it’s just a great community to live and grow in.”

Although running the Leeton Heritage Motor Inn requires the same amount of effort and hours as the Bond’s were accustomed to, life seems to go at a more relaxed pace. “It’s more peaceful, you get to know people better,” affirms Wayne. “For a work environment, and for families as well, it’s just a great community to live and grow in.”

Known as the food bowl of Australia, Leeton supports a great deal of agricultural business. Here you will find rice, cotton, citrus, grapes, walnuts, meat and more, but farming is certainly not the only sector that thrives in this Riverina town. It takes a lot of different trades to keep so many varied agri-businesses prosperous. Where there are trades, there are families, and where there are families, there are educational institutions, childcare centres, supermarkets and sporting facilities, community groups and health services. Wayne has noticed, “There’s a lot here that’s great for school-aged children.”

The cost of living in Leeton is definitely cheaper than you’ll find in the city too, and the town provides the opportunity for people to get into the housing market at a reasonable price. Overall, this means lower levels of financial pressure and the chance for a better work-life balance. Something the Bond’s have taken advantage of, recently purchasing their own home in their new town.

In his role as President of Leeton Business Chamber, Wayne is actively involved in collaborations with the Leeton Shire Council and other business initiatives. The Business Enterprise Centre (BEC) and the Chamber run information sessions and workshops to keep local businesses relevant in the modern age. And after a number of years without them, the town is again hosting annual business awards. An excellent showcase for local businesses.

Wayne tells us that the Council is keen to develop tourism in the area and has been very proactive in creating and evolving different events, which is fantastic for the town and sense of community. No doubt, this will mean the region can look forward to even more employment and lifestyle opportunities into the future.

Wayne’s main piece of advice for anyone thinking of a making a Country Change is to go and visit the town. “I think you need to just go and experience it.

Check out a country town and try the coffee in the cafes and just talk to people... they’re just friendly, and they like to say, ‘G’day.’ If you want to chat, they’re happy to chat. But until you actually experience [a town] and give it a go, then it’s hard to really know whether it’s going to be for you or not.”

LIVING & HOUSING

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE
\$255,000

RENT AVERAGE
\$260 PER WEEK

SHIRE POPULATION
11168

CLIMATE

SUMMER 19C - 34C
WINTER 6C - 15C





opening global doors

LOCKHART SHIRE BUSINESSES USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE, CONNECT AND CONQUER!

Head 520 kilometres south-west of Sydney and you'll find an emerging powerhouse of connected and thriving businesses. Despite having a population of just 3,200, Lockhart Shire entrepreneurs are fired up to outperform city competitors and step onto a global stage. In fact, the region is an incubator for small business.

More than 20 per cent of Lockhart Shire's workforce owns their own business – be it farming, retail, healthcare, hospitality or professional services – they're no strangers to fostering local businesses.

When you lose long commutes, sky-high mortgages and you set up in an area with low rates, low unemployment, an increasing population, and above-average pay – it pays to become a country changer. Affordable shopfronts, industrial land up for grabs and access to the NBN is helping many business-minded folks make their country change a smooth transition.



LOCATION A HELP, NOT A HINDRANCE

For **Michelle Bailey**, the move from Melbourne to The Rock in Lockhart Shire, wasn't taken lightly. She had a well-established edible image business that required on-time and perfectly intact deliveries – and she had many clients counting on Custom Icing for their show-stopping celebrations.

All worries were quickly abolished when Michelle realised she was getting better service and convenience as a business owner, than she ever did in the city.

"The speed and reliability of the internet here is better than what I could access in Melbourne. When you've got fast access to the internet, living in a small-town really has no negative impact on your business."



ARTIST DRAWS ON COUNTRY CHARM AND TECHNOLOGY

As a digital artist, **Rachel Viski** relies on technology to run her business. Her digital model also means she can also work away from her home, which she does some days to break the solitude that can come with working remotely.

"I do find I miss the water cooler banter some days. But I've found a way to feel like I'm a part of a community's buzz by packing up the laptop and taking myself into Wagga. It's a 25-minute drive and I sit in a coffee shop and work away while watching everyone else go about their day. It keeps me motivated."



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: MILBRULONG WATER TOWER BY SCOTT NAGY & KRIMSONE; 'BUNYIP FROM BURRA CREEK' BY SEAN MEANY (2018 NATIONAL FARM ART AWARD); FARM LANDS; ACCESS TO PREMIUM DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY HAS ENABLED JO PALMER TO BUILD HER ONLINE PORTAL FOR REMOTE WORKERS; LOCAL MARKETS, GALORE LOOKOUT TOWER; IT'S SMILES ALL ROUND AS MICHELLE BAILEY ENJOYS FAST INTERNET; RACHEL VISKI BLENDS HER LOVE FOR THE COUNTRY WITH MODERN TECHNOLOGY IN HER DIGITAL DESIGN BUSINESS.



REMOTE WORKING BUILT AN AWARD-WINNING EMPIRE

Jo Palmer is the 2019 AgriFutures Rural Women's Award National Winner for her role in connecting work opportunities with hundreds of talented professionals and businesses in regional Australia.

Run from her small farm, Jo said living in a country town had zero negative impacts on her business Pointer Remote Roles. Instead, it helped her grow her profile as a businesswoman.

"There is no way I would have been able to grow my business at the rate I have if I lived in the city. I have had so many fantastic opportunities open up for me, living and working here. I hope more people see the potential that awaits them in Lockhart Shire."

ATTRACTIONS AND RECREATION

Lockhart Shire is home to two of the most iconic landmarks in the Riverina, The Rock Nature Reserve - Kengal Aboriginal Place and Galore Hill Scenic Reserve. Towering high above the plains, The Rock Nature Reserve - Kengal Aboriginal Place makes for a great day out. Take a picnic and hike to the top for stunning views, or meander along the tracks at the base and enjoy fantastic fauna and flora. You never know which of our great native animals will pass you by. Award-winning sculpture trails, wool art, local galleries, unique performances and a fantastic Spirit of the Land Festival are just a taste of what's available in Lockhart Shire's growing arts scene. The Shire also has a host of groups and events covering a vast range of hobbies and interests.

LIVING & HOUSING

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE

LOCKHART \$160,000
THE ROCK \$281,000

RENT AVERAGE

\$150PW (2016 CENSUS)

SHIRE POPULATION

3119 (2016 CENSUS)

CLIMATE

SUMMER 15C - 33C
WINTER 3C - 16C

The major townships of Lockhart Shire are Lockhart and The Rock and the smaller villages of Yerong Creek, Pleasant Hills and Milbrulong.





A NEWFOUND RESPECT

When Patrick Dawson left Narrandera in regional New South Wales as a determined 18-year-old law student, he thought it would be for good. Nine years later, he returned. A decision that propelled his career exponentially...

Patrick's plan was laid out perfectly in his head the day he left his family home. Work hard, enjoy the beach - and then keep working hard. Like any young lawyer, he wanted to become a partner at a firm one day, but he knew it was a big dream a long way in the future. He knew it would require a lot of hours behind the desk and a big financial outlay as a buy-in.

But then he had a sliding doors moment...

"I was working long hours. I loved practising but I saw the kind of future I would have if I stayed," said Patrick. "I thought, 'What is the point of living here when I don't have the time to enjoy it?' I realised that there was nothing I was doing that I couldn't be doing in my own home town."

And he was right. Well, actually, he undersold himself.

Now, at just 27, he has reached his dream. He owns his own firm, Patrick Dawson Law. Something he never thought was possible before he turned 40.

"I moved back and was very nervous. I wasn't sure what was going to happen but my friends were supportive, which helped. Most people said 'why wouldn't you?' It was almost like it was too good to be true."

Narrandera would seem to many, a dream. Situated a 5-hour drive from Melbourne and just over 6 hours to Sydney, the Riverina township sits alongside the Shire's villages Borellan and Grong Grong. Narrandera provides its residents with a lifestyle where work-life balance and connection with nature is a daily reality – not just a desire. It's also affordable with the median price for a four-bedroom house \$254,500.

These were just some of the reasons why returning to set up a business was an easy call for Patrick. Working out of his father's office, a well-respected insurance broker in Narrandera, Patrick admits while it helped to have support from his dad, he still had to prove himself.

"In the country, you have to be more diverse. I cover most areas of law now, except criminal."

Currently finishing his Masters, Patrick also saved with other costs that would have made it more financially draining starting a business in the city.

"Real estate is a lot more affordable here but also, you don't have the fierce competition that you would have in the city. That alone means I save a lot of money each year on marketing."

While the ocean beckons him at times, he said he now has the flexibility to enjoy his downtime. "There is nothing I was doing



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP, FAR LEFT: LOCAL DROP, BARELLAN BEER; NARRANDERA RAIL BRIDGE; HUTCHIN BROTHERS ENGINEERING; HIKERS ON THE HILLSIDE; MICHAEL LYONS - SANDHILLS ARTEFACTS; NARRANDERA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS; ST. MELS CATHOLIC CHURCH; PATRICK DAWSON.

in Wollongong that I am not doing now. I miss the ocean, sure, but it is a compromise. People in regional areas respect the 9 am - 5 pm workday. In the city, clients demand responses and you have to be available 24/7."

With his dog, Bruno the dachshund, Patrick is rediscovering the local bushwalks, waterholes and river kayaking.

"I lived in an apartment for eight years - I didn't actually appreciate the space I had growing up. Returning as an adult, it's like I am exploring my backyard for the first time!"

He said he has moved back with a fresh set of eyes and more appreciation for the unique region.

"I knew all this stuff was here when I was a kid but I didn't have any interest in it. Now I have friends visiting from out of town and I regularly play tour guide.

Within the town there are lots of recreational activities like visiting Rocky Water Holes, sipping coffee from the local cafes, and swimming at the Lake Talbot Pool. For something a little bit different outside town, I love to visit the local wineries and Junee's Licorice and Chocolate Factory is a favourite, too.

"I definitely have no regrets. I would say to anyone who is considering a country change to Narrandera, just give it a go - you have nothing to lose. In fact, you will gain a great community."

LIVING & HOUSING

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE
FOUR BEDROOM \$254,500

RENT AVERAGE
THREE BEDROOM HOUSE
\$230 PW

SHIRE POPULATION
5976

CLIMATE

SUMMER 19C - 34C
WINTER 6C - 15C





A PLACE TO CALL HOME NO MATTER WHERE YOU'RE FROM

For the Southwell family, a toddler and a newborn were no barrier to making a Country Change from the coastal city of Batemans Bay. Having both grown up in regional areas, Tom and Helle Southwell were keen to make a move that would give their boys the same lifestyle and opportunities they enjoyed growing up.

A PERFECT PLACE TO PUT DOWN ROOTS

Returning to Helle's hometown of Tumbarumba for a Christmas holiday allowed the couple to see the vibrant township from a new perspective. Nestled in the western foothills of New South Wales' Snowy Mountains, the Snowy Valleys region has a combined population of 14,644. Tumbarumba, being home to around 2000 people, is just one of the many towns and regional centres flourishing in the cool mountain climate. Visiting again a few months later to help with the harvest in Helle's parent's vineyard, the Southwell's were convinced that 'Tumba' was the perfect place to put down their roots.

Helle remembers, "My parents planted the first vines when I was in kindergarten." So, growing up with **Johansen Wines** was an everyday part of her life. But with established careers, Tom and Helle didn't initially plan their move back to the area to become integral parts of the family business. "The move was definitely lifestyle based," Tom said. However, it wasn't too long before the couple realised how much they enjoyed being a part of the winery.



LIFESTYLE AND EMPLOYMENT GROW TOGETHER

In a few years, the extended family has rebranded and built up their label, created a Cellar Door and have added a Bed and Breakfast to their thriving mix of offerings. But it's not all been about work. "There's fishing, mountain biking, equestrian and lots of other sports," said Tom. "Not to mention the flagship food and wine festivals, which we love being a part of," he added.

With such a range of resources and natural beauty, the Snowy Valleys have a lot to offer locals and tourists alike. The Southwell's believe there is a diverse range of opportunities for tourism, businesses and families alike, and see a lot of potential for growth in the area. "If you're interested in making a Country Change, definitely look at Tumbarumba," insisted Helle. "Come and talk to the locals, have a beer at the pub, buy some wine, eat at the restaurants, come and stay at our B'n'B," they suggest. "There are opportunities here in every season, it's very diverse, and people here really do want you to succeed," Tom added.

THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: JOHANSEN WINES BED & BREAKFAST AT 'GLENBURNIE COTTAGE'; THE JOHANSEN WINES TEAM; TOM, HELLE, JACK AND CHARLIE AT JOHANSEN WINES; JOHANSEN WINES VINEYARD; JOHANSEN WINES CELLAR DOOR.



NICO AND ANGELINE
MULDER WITH THEIR
DAUGHTERS

Photo: NF Photography

FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY TO A COUNTRY TOWN

The Mulder family also found a wealth of possibilities in the Snowy Valleys. “We moved straight from South Africa to Tumbarumba,” Angeline Mulder explains. “It was the best decision ever,” she said of the choice she and her husband, Nico, made to expatriate. “As a family, we were looking for a better environment to raise our children. We weren’t confident about their future in South Africa and wanted to raise them in a safer environment with more opportunities,” she said. When Nico was offered a position in Tumbarumba’s local blueberry industry, they were delighted with the opportunity.

BLESSED WITH SAFETY AND BEAUTY

Although the opportunity for agricultural work was the driving factor behind the family’s move, Angeline said that the safety and beauty of the area was ‘the cherry on the top.’ “Here in Tumba, the kids can play outside and just be kids,” she said with gratitude, adding, “Living here has made us appreciate nature so much more. We have time now to go for walks or take a day trip up to the snow in the winter.”

The lack of city congestion has also been an enjoyable lifestyle improvement. “The worst traffic jam in Tumba is cattle being moved on the way to town,” she cheerfully explained. With some of the best farming lands for cattle and sheep on offer in Tumbarumba, a Country Change to the region is an excellent opportunity.

A job in a regional town is so much more than just employment. “It’s an opportunity to contribute to the community,” said Angeline. “Businesses rely on one another to keep the community employed and to stimulate economic growth,” she added. And this is something that the Mulder family have been happy to actively participate in.

LIVING & HOUSING

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE

\$250,000

RENT AVERAGE

\$250PW

SHIRE POPULATION

14644 (2016 CENSUS)

CLIMATE

SUMMER 11C - 30C

WINTER 1C - 14C



a place where people and businesses thrive

HOW THIS MOVE COULD BE THE BEST DECISION FOR YOUR FUTURE

Renowned nationally as the friendliest shire in NSW, Temora is also a place where you can thrive.

It has all the perks of country living. No long commutes, a supportive and welcoming community, medical services and great schools. And you don't have to be a millionaire to own a home. But Temora offers much more. Just ask recent country changer, Tony Watts.

Tony had visited Temora, which is just over 400kms from Sydney, on work trips in the past and was impressed by its vibrant and clean main street. The enthusiasm at Temora's stand at one of the Country Change expos was contagious. Two weeks later the family visited Temora and started planning their move.

Tony, Emily and their 6-year-old daughter Abby were apprehensive about leaving older daughter Jess and Tony's elderly parents in Sydney. But a quieter lifestyle was calling them, and with Sydney only being a day trip away, regular visits have been possible. FaceTime calls have helped too!

"We have found living here the best decision we have made. Our expectations have been exceeded in so many ways. The lifestyle is so much better for us," said Emily.



"We have found living here the best decision we have made. Our expectations have been exceeded in so many ways. The lifestyle is so much better for us."

"I walk to and from work which takes 15 to 20 mins each way. When I walk in the mornings a lot of the kids are walking or riding their scooters/bikes to school which reminded of what it was like when I was growing up in Sydney."

And local facilities has meant Abby is kept active. "She is currently playing soccer and has participated in basketball, little athletics, swimming and wants to have a go at tennis in the spring. We have a world-class aeroplane museum, a fantastic rural museum, 2 supermarkets, 5 petrol stations, 5 schools, preschools, picture theatre, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, ovals, playgrounds, putt-putt golf, great cafes, shops and restaurants to mention a few. We even have running water and the internet!" joked Tony.

Financially they are also much better off. "Our 4 bedroom house cost \$272,000 which would get you a brick wall in Sydney! The cost of travel is much less as everything most of the time is 5 minutes away," they added.

But it isn't only people who are thriving in Temora – businesses are too.

Thanks to an active council dedicated to economic growth, local businesses are thriving including Kindly Darling. Co-founded by locals Alison Swanston and Libby Kite, Kindly Darling is a one-stop-shop for the most sustainable fashion labels on the market, aiming to reverse the wardrobe crisis that's killing the planet, without compromising on current trends. Kindly Darling has a hugely successful online store, along with a physical shop in Temora's bustling main street.

Both Alison and Libby have lived in big cities in Australia and abroad, but have chosen to set up their business and raise young families in Temora. Both have remarked how moving back to country living has provided a better quality of life.

"Our lifestyle has a perfect blend of family, friends, and business. We could not imagine raising our families anywhere



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: FLOWERING CANOLA FIELDS IN SPRING; SUNSET OVER LAKE CENTENARY; LAKE LOOP WALKING TRACK; KINDLY DARLING CO-FOUNDERS ALISON SWANSTON AND LIBBY KITE; TONY, EMILY AND DAUGHTER ABBY WATTS; RETIREES SAL AND MARYLIN CARRERO RELOCATED TO TEMORA FROM THE CENTRAL COAST.

“DO IT! Make the move! Temora is very supportive of emerging businesses and the Council will go out of their way to educate and inspire.”

else – Temora is such a family-friendly town with so many children’s activities and opportunities that rival that of our city counterparts. Plus, you cannot put a price tag on wide-open spaces, fresh air and the ability for our children to connect with nature on a day-to-day basis. The cost of living makes it possible for us to offer so many more opportunities including educational and many overseas travel adventures.” says Allison.

Setting up Kindly Darling in Temora has meant less competition and cheaper set-up costs compared with larger cities. They’re also grateful for all the home-town encouragement, stating the Temora community has been pivotal in their success.

“We cannot think of anything that has been a challenge in opening in a country town. With the internet, we feel that any business can thrive and be as successful as their urban counterparts,” said Libby.

Alison and Libby encourage others living in the city, who dream of starting a business but finding it too daunting and expensive to start, to consider a country change to Temora. There’s even a modern, low-cost co-working space on the main street that is perfect for start-ups and remote workers.

“DO IT! Make the move! Temora is very supportive of emerging businesses and the Council will go out of their way to educate and inspire.”

LIVING & HOUSING

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE

\$292,000

RENT AVERAGE

THREE BEDROOM HOUSE

\$280 PW

SHIRE POPULATION

6,256

CLIMATE

SUMMER 15C - 40C

WINTER 1C - 14C





Photo: Julian Lopez



Photo: Jeremy Kruckel



Photo: Wagga Wagga Art Gallery

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: JULIAN & LILIANA LOPEZ EXERCISING IN THE WOODS ON THE SUGAR PINE WALK (RECENTLY DESTROYED IN BUSHFIRES); OIL PAINTINGS UNDER THE STARS; ARTIST JUJU ROCHE AND FAMILY ENJOYING MANGOPLAH LIFESTYLE; BLUEMIND STUDIO; 'UNEARTH' SOLO EXHIBIT 2019.

WAGGA WAGGA: THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL CAPITAL OF NSW

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Vibrant is an often overused term when describing a region, but the activity in the Riverina has naturally developed an energy and vibrancy that leaves visitors with a positive experience.

Locals are proud of their region and welcome everyone with open arms. With more time for an active lifestyle, over 150,000 people across the region enjoy a wide array of events, activities, restaurants, arts, culture and recreation facilities.

After more than a decade of cramped and busy city living in Sydney, Colombian couple, Julian and Liliana Lopez wanted to broaden their horizons. However, finding a house in a suitable suburb with enough space to one day raise a family, was simply unattainable. "Property prices were intangible in a decent Sydney suburb," Julian explained. "You have to be a millionaire to afford what we really wanted," he added.

So they looked further afield and found that many regional centres had great potential, and could provide both the lifestyle

and employment they desired. Working with local company, Huntsman Recruiting, Julian was provided such an opportunity with the livestock equipment supplier, Proway. Liliana was also able to transfer her job to Wagga, as her employer, a retail optometrist, didn't want to lose her. "These jobs really allowed us to make this new start," said Julian.

In the beginning, Wagga Wagga's proximity to both Sydney and Melbourne also provided the couple with peace of mind. They liked the fact that the things they were used to were still accessible. Despite this, Julian and Liliana make the trip back to the city only when absolutely necessary and use these journeys to remind themselves how much better their lifestyle is now.

"The lack of traffic chaos here was a game-changer for me. I used to spend one to two hours a day commuting and now it's only 15 minutes," Julian revealed. "There's fresh air, green paddocks and vineyards, cows in the fields and beautiful views. And that's just on the way to work!" he added.



Photo: Tayla Martin



Photo: Tayla Martin

FINDING FULFILMENT IN A CREATIVE REGIONAL CITY

Another Country Changer from Sydney is artist Julia (Juju) Roche. Although having lived in the beachside suburb of Bronte for eight years, both Julia and her husband, Mick, grew up in the countryside. Three years ago they had two young children and another on the way. With Julia's dad wanting to lighten his load on the family farm at Mangoplah (on the outskirts of Wagga Wagga), the couple decided it was the perfect time for a Country Change.

“Moving to the country to take on some responsibility on our family farm, where I grew up, was an exciting prospect,” recalls Julia. Mick manages the farm and also works in town in the grain industry, while Julia has her visual art practice in a repurposed woolshed on their property.

Living in gratitude for the space, fresh air and calmer environment for her family, Julia noted, “There is a really strong sense of family culture in the community. The support from friends and family (particularly when you’ve got little kids) is invaluable. Though, what I love most is that my kids now have an experienced appreciation of the land, of how food is grown and how important it is to look after our environment.”

For those unfamiliar with regional city living, there is often an assumption that there is little to do, or a lack of opportunity. Julia is quick to dispel this myth. “I don’t want to generalise, but Wagga is a terrifically diverse, vibrant and social place to

live. I work and collaborate with an incredible bunch of artists and definitely feel more connected here than I ever did in the city,” she said.

When arriving in a new area, Julia suggests talking to locals and asking questions about what’s happening. For artists and art-lovers alike, there is no shortage of information, support services, inspiration and community.

The city is home to the Eastern Riverina Arts office and has a beautiful public art gallery. There are also several smaller privately run Art Gallery shops, Rabbit Books Arthouse and Paper Pear, that run workshops and sell local artwork.

Julia admits that as a visual artist, her move has involved compromise and adjustment, both professionally and emotionally. However, as things have panned out, she believes those changes have been beneficial to her practice. She explained, “I have never felt more comfortable and authentic in my practice, and I think it’s because I now have time to think conceptually, process ideas and explore aesthetics.”

Featuring all the facilities of larger cities and within comfortable proximity to them, Wagga Wagga is a thriving regional centre. With so much on offer, these families have been able to stay connected, both personally and professionally, to all that they need for vibrant, fulfilled lives.

LIVING & HOUSING

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE

\$347,728

MEDIAN RENTAL PRICE

\$340

POPULATION

65,258 (ABS ERP 2019)

CLIMATE

SUMMER 14C - 31C

WINTER 3C - 14C



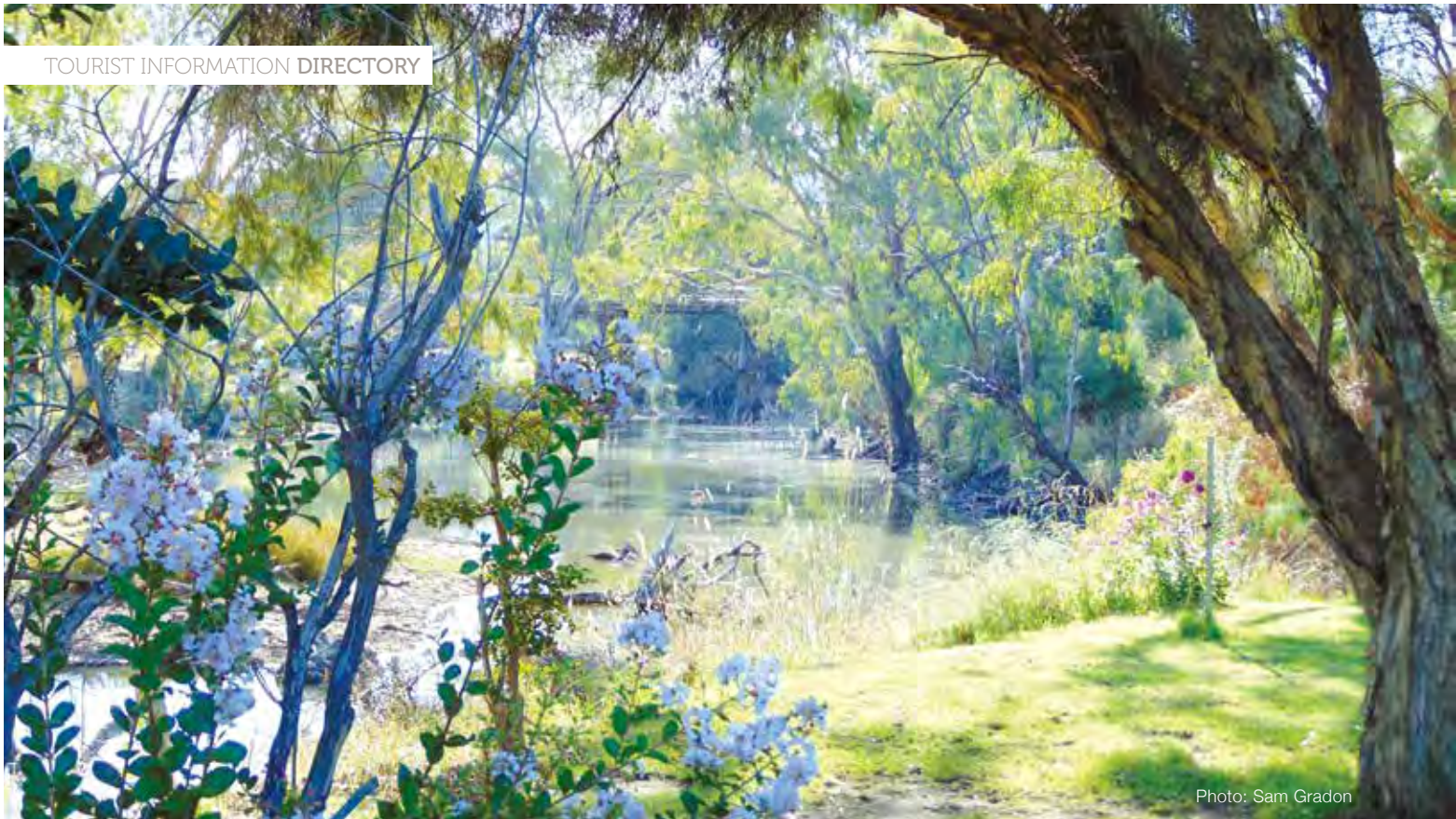


Photo: Sam Gradon

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ABOVE: MURRUMBIDGEE RIVER.



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