

Mother's Day



London bombing survivor Gill Hicks says her daughter Amélie, 13, is her second miracle.

Words Sarah Hender
Photographs Ben Kelly

UNBREAKABLE BONDS

SALIFE sits down with three extraordinary South Australian women and their children ahead of Mother's Day.

Gill Hicks

“**W**e are twins separated by age,” Gill Hicks says of her 13-year-old daughter, Amélie.

They think so alike that, as Amélie says, they often find themselves finishing each other's sentences.

Gill, a survivor of the July 7 London bombing in 2005, was the last living person to be rescued that day. She lost both legs, half a lung and most of her hearing.

Gill refers to Amélie as her second miracle.

Amélie's christening was held at a fountain in London's Russell Square, close to where Gill was found, with her rescuers there to celebrate.

“Motherhood for me, in that moment, became symbolic of the transformative power of their individual actions. By saving my life, this new life was possible.”

So, what kind of mother is Gill?

“I try not to be a helicopter parent. I think of myself as more of a private jet,” Gill laughs. “I fly in, check all is good and leave again.”

But it's clear that Amélie won't be needing too much rescuing – she holds a black belt in taekwondo.

The confident teen announces, “I already know what I want to do with my life.”

Amélie is working on a business, Nature is Life, an idea that came to her when she was just six years old.

She offers environmentally-sound home-made products with a plan to direct some profits to environmental organisations. Amélie has already found her purpose – to help build a sustainable planet.

Amélie has watched her mother pursue her life's purpose, to remind people of their shared humanity through her advocacy and creative work as director of the M.A.D. Creative Agency.

“Rather than give me anxiety, what happened to Mum drove me to who I am now. I also want to make a difference,” Amélie says.

There is no television at home so family life consists of conversation, cooking, singing and creating stories together.

Amélie's favourite childhood memory is of Gill reading her stories, giving every character a different voice and offering life lessons.

Gill says her daughter was born an old soul. Amélie's calm nature has helped put Gill's busy life in perspective and there aren't many aspects of Gill's creative life that Amélie hasn't willingly been involved in, such as assisting with rehearsals for Gill's Fringe productions or helping with marketing.

“That is the most wonderful aspect about our relationship – she's just always with me, always involved,” Gill says. “Every day, I tell her how grateful I am to be her mum.”



Above Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC has held the highest diplomatic positions in the country, but her daughter Sophie says she has always been a mother before anything else. **Opposite page** Sophie, who is based in Canberra, recently paid her mother a visit at Government House.

Frances Adamson

Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, together with her husband Rod Bunten, works hard to keep their family flock of six closely connected, despite not having lived together in one place for 15 years.

The Governor of South Australia's eldest daughter, Claire, 34, lives in the United Kingdom; Katherine, 28, and Sophie, 25, are based in Canberra; and Matthew, 31, is in Melbourne.

It can be a challenge with children spread far apart but they stay in touch by phone or FaceTime.

This Mother's Day is likely to just involve phone calls, but for the Governor, that's enough.

Frances remembers early Mother's Days that were a bit more involved and although appreciated, it didn't always go to plan.

"I've had Mother's Days where everything's been brought in on a tray. Everyone's jumped on the bed and the coffee plunger ends up going everywhere," she says. "After that, breakfast in bed wasn't so attractive," Frances laughs.

Frances has held the highest diplomatic positions in the country, but her children are left in no doubt about where her priorities lie.

"She's always our mother before anything else," youngest daughter Sophie says.

Sophie remembers walking along their favourite beach together at Port Willunga a few years ago and her mother asked her how she was. "I was struggling at the time. I said I didn't want to burden

her considering how much she had on her shoulders. I'll never forget her turning to me and saying, 'I've got broad shoulders. I can take it'."

For someone with so many balls to juggle, it has been important for Frances to have one family rule. Honesty.

"You don't hide things. If there's anything wrong, you share it," Frances says.

Sophie adds: "It's impossible for us not to see how important Mum's job is or how busy she is but her love for us and her availability to us when we need her has always been explicit."

The children have access to their mother's diary and when they see a gap, they jump in. If it's urgent, she always picks up, no matter who she's with.

Frances loves how her children consider it their responsibility to keep her grounded.

When she was Secretary (head) of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, her daughter Claire, with tongue firmly in cheek, gave her a gift of a mug with the inscription World's Best Secretary.

"If I show the slightest inclination to take myself too seriously, they will pounce on me and I'm very grateful for that."





Author Hannah Kent reads to her children, Anouk and Rory.

Hannah Kent

As Hannah Kent watched her eight-year-old daughter, Anouk, perform a school piano recital, she recalled Anouk's earlier school days when she refused to be up on stage with her class.

"Here she was performing alone for everyone and I could see how moved people were," says the celebrated South Australian author.

"It's lovely as a parent to see that other people notice how far your children have come."

This change in her daughter has not happened by accident. Anouk is just like Hannah was at her age – shy, quiet and observant.

Hannah could see that Anouk needed help to face her fears just like Hannah did when she was Anouk's age.

Hannah's own mother encouraged her to join their local youth theatre group. Hannah credits this experience with giving her the self-confidence to do the public speaking she does now, as well as fostering her creativity.

"It was in my participation with local theatre that I learned to set aside my own nerves and subconsciousness and inhabit a character," Hannah says.

In turn, Hannah has done the same for her daughter, enrolling Anouk in that same theatre group.

"It's been a great way for her to become comfortable with being uncomfortable."

Hannah and her wife Heidi live in the Adelaide Hills, close to



Above Author Hannah Kent says her mother recently nudged her out of her comfort zone as a child, something she is now doing for her own children Anouk, pictured **below**, and Rory.



where Hannah grew up in leafy Aldgate, with both their children, Anouk and their son, Rory, 6.

The biggest surprise of motherhood for Hannah is how it triggered powerful memories of her own childhood, prompting her to write a memoir, *Always Home, Always Homesick*, published last year.

The book centres around the year she spent in Iceland on exchange as a homesick teenager. That time in her life became the inspiration for her acclaimed debut novel, *Burial Rites*, setting Hannah on her writing journey, changing her life forever.

Writing her memoir gave Hannah fresh insight into her young self and how she sometimes struggled to stand up for herself. This new insight has been invaluable to Hannah in raising her children.

As a same sex couple, Hannah and Heidi thought they might face some challenges raising their children, simply because their family structure is different, but that has not been their experience.

Anouk came home from school one day saying that one of the boys asked if she had two mums.

"We were bracing ourselves for a conversation about inclusivity and difference, Hannah says "Anouk said she told the boy she did have two mums and instead of a dad, she has a donor."

To which the boy replied, 'That's not fair. I want two mums.' **59**