

EDWINA JAMIESONTalent Manager, Industrial Light & Magic,
Singapore

Being offered your dream job and not being able to take it is tough when it happens once, but when it comes around a fourth time, you'd better sit up and take notice. At 47, Adelaide's Edwina Jamieson did.

Edwina describes herself as a frustrated wannabe actor who went behind the scenes and fell in love with animation. Last year she became a Talent Manager for Industrial Light & Magic, the visual effects company founded by filmmaker George Lucas of *Star Wars* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* fame, based in Singapore. There is only one complication. She has a husband and three children back in Adelaide who she currently sees just one week a month.

At last estimate, back in 2011 when the mining boom was running, there were more than 200,000 Australians commuting more than 100km for their job. Bernard Salt, the social commentator, says it's increasingly accepted by workers and companies.

Salt says companies are more prepared to pay for top talent to fly to their workplaces, and that those workers are more prepared to commute than uproot the family.

"This is a very different world where families are used to people coming and going, and communicating through text, email and social media," he notes. "Geography is less relevant but that doesn't mean there is any less love or commitment or family bonding."

That's certainly true of Edwina. When she was last offered this role, the family was based in San Francisco and in the process of packing up for home after five years away. She said no then. This time around, they looked at each other. It was now or never.

"Edwina has been an excellent mother. I just felt she deserved the opportunity to work in her dream job after all the time and effort she has put into our family," says her husband Christopher.

Christopher, 47, works full-time in corporate development at Beach Energy and their children, Emily, 15, Phoebe, 14, and Archie, 6, are all settled in school in Adelaide. It wasn't ideal, but Christopher was prepared to run the show back home.

Edwina's role in Singapore is to manage more than 100 visual effects artists for ILM, the pool of talent who help create realistic 3D animated models for ILM's film sequences. She is responsible for the artists' career development, helping with the day-to-day show and artist needs.

It doesn't ease up when she comes home for her one week a month; she runs her work meetings from home. Of course, none of this would be possible without the internet.

The decision for Edwina to commute surprised their family and friends, who saw her as the classic stay-at-home mum.

"I think most people are still stuck in that mindset, that a mother should never be separated from her kids," says Christopher. "Our situation is not for everyone, but our kids have been amazing, adjusting to the change. Access to technology has helped with that."

Bedtime reading for son Archie still happens with his mum and his dad by his side, even if Edwina is watching on with Facetime. Like any six-year-old, it is a routine he craves.

Friends were sceptical about how Christopher would cope. "But Christopher just knocked it out of the park," Edwina says.



ON THE FLY

Think of FIFO workers, and miners in hi-vis jackets come to mind. But Adelaide's Fly-In Fly-Out community includes professionals who love what SA offers in lifestyle, education and property but find their work elsewhere – whether it's Singapore, Sydney or beyond

WORDS SARAH HENDER PICTURES BY MATT TURNER AND TRICIA WATKINSON

"Because he is so busy, he is very strategic about the shopping, he plans all the meals and everything they eat is very healthy. He's blown everyone away. I'm very lucky."

The fatigue and monotony surprised him. He has new empathy for Edwina and stay-at-home parents, especially single ones.

"I knew my transition was complete when I was sitting with the netball mums and one

said she got so sick of picking up kids' clothes that she threw them in the pool. I found myself saying things like 'well done, so you should have'," he says.

Although they wouldn't want the arrangement to go on forever, the couple agree the positives have outweighed the hardships. Christopher has loved spending more time with the children and he and

Edwina have an enhanced appreciation for each other. They are both glad that Adelaide is their family's home base.

"When you don't live in Adelaide, you forget how amazing it is," she says. "We live up in the hills and it is so pretty. I miss the beautiful fresh produce and how you can live so healthily here. The restaurants and the wine. I miss the wine!"



ANDY SHEA

Founding Director of Brown Sauce, a creative media and content development services company

Andy Shea, 47, from Manchester, was never going to be that nine-to-five type of guy. His CV reads like a fantasy adventure. Once a bobby on the beat in London's East End, he later became a journalist. As Chief of Reuters' Bureau in Vietnam he was thrown in jail by the government for writing stories it didn't like. Along the way, he has written eight books, with two more in the pipeline.

These days Andy runs his creative company Brown Sauce (named after the HP of his homeland) from Adelaide's East End. His company strategises, writes and manages tenders for big projects on behalf of construction companies.

His most recent project was based in Hong Kong for the \$46 billion building of a massive waste management facility to deal with the territory's lack of landfill space. These are not small jobs.

Andy and his Adelaide-born wife Narelle moved here from Sydney when she was expecting their first child. Andy's work was likely to lead to some travel away from the

family, so they chose Adelaide as a place that would offer a strong support network, affordable housing and easier living.

Narelle, 42, runs her own business, Universal Export Management, from home, preparing export applications for Austrade grants for small businesses. Geography wasn't an issue for her. Although the couple knew that Andy would need to travel, they didn't count on how much. Within a week of moving to Adelaide, he was packing his bag for Sydney for a seven-week job.

Since then, he has been on a plane every other week.

"There's not a lot being built here in Adelaide," he says. "The recent big projects have come and gone, such as the RAH. Adelaide doesn't have the growth to support ongoing civil construction and big infrastructure"

Naively, he thinks now, he assumed that his interstate and overseas clients would be happy with some of the work being done remotely via laptop.

"Engineers don't believe in video conferencing and invariably during the conference call they will ask when I am coming down. I've flown to Melbourne for one hour meetings," says Andy.

There have been times when they have



FIFO worker Edwina Jamieson, centre, with her husband Christopher and children Archie, Emily and Phoebe, left; Andy Shea, top, and Jody Rowe, above, with her dog Ruby

questioned the lifestyle. The toughest time was when their children, Harry, now 6, and Louie, 4, were younger and Narelle, sleep-deprived, was managing on her own.

The children struggled with Andy's absence, too. When Andy was due to leave, Harry, at 2, would sense the change.

"It got to the point where he'd climb into my suitcase. I learnt to wait until he'd gone to bed before I would pack and tiptoe out of the house," says Andy.

Things are better now the children are older. They are able to count the sleeps till dad is home and understand what he is doing and why he is doing it - something not always clear to their parents. But now, thanks to a recent decision, their understanding has just got clearer.

Andy's love of the Adelaide Hills has led to the couple recently buying a block of land in Piccadilly where they are building their dream home. The Sheas are now committed to their unconventional lifestyle, knowing it is funding their ability to raise their family in a safe and serene environment.

"As hard as it can be, I'd still prefer to do what I do. The rewards of it are financially a lot better so we can afford to do what we're doing. I feel like it's worth it now ... before I felt like I was just paying off the tax man."

JODY ROWE

Chief Executive Officer, Rowe Advisory

As the daughter of Bob Rowe, one of Australia's best-known red meat processors and the other half of T & R Pastoral company (now Thomas Foods International), Jody Rowe was used to being in a male-dominated environment. Rather than work in the family business though, Jody chose to carve out her own career in another predominantly male environment, the mining industry.

Trained as an accountant in Adelaide, Jody, 53, initially worked in a commercial role on site in the goldfields of central Western Australia, a job she thrived in, despite the demanding conditions of a six week on, one week off, fly-in fly-out roster and the rampant chauvinism of the 1990s.

"Only a resilient female could survive out there," she says. "If I hadn't come from a commercially resilient family background I probably wouldn't have put up with all the chauvinistic comments."



Peter Slattery and his wife Melissa have found the commuting lifestyle benefits them both. Picture: Tricia Watkinson

"I gave as good as I got!" Jody explains. Her work ethic and passion for the resources industry propelled Jody's career to working in commercial, contracts and procurement roles for multinational companies including Barrick Gold and Rio Tinto. Unfettered by a husband and children, Jody could focus on her career.

In 2013, Jody was based in Brisbane, working long hours for the Queensland Gas Company (now Shell) as head of contracts and procurement. Her social life was limited to business networking. That all changed when her father died in October of that year.

About to turn 50, it was all the impetus she needed to redress some balance in her life.

Jody left QGC several months later and set up her own consulting business, Rowe Advisory, in Brisbane first and, now, Adelaide. Although most of the high-level business will be based in Queensland, Jody is planning on creating jobs in her hometown where she now lives.

She sees Adelaide as the ideal shared services hub with its low cost of overheads, cheap cost of living and plenty of employable graduates looking for opportunities here. Where some see Adelaide's size as a negative for business, Jody sees opportunity.

Calling Adelaide home means that Jody can reconnect with family and friends, and revive that social life that was missing in Brisbane. Having built a solid profile in the resources industry, Jody can also now reap the benefits and build her business without compromising the rest of her life. Her approach seems to be working with 18 consultants now working for her.

"When I was in Brisbane, I was constantly thinking 'what do I need to do?'. I've worked out that you don't need to check the business plan every three days, it is actually okay," Jody says.

She travels to Brisbane regularly to check in with her business there but she is determined to make the commuting work for her. She arranges her travel for several week stretches rather than just a week at a time, not only for the purpose of keeping a close eye on the business but also out of consideration for her dog, Ruby.

When she returns home to Adelaide, she sees her friends and family, sometimes just

taking off to Middleton for a couple of days to spend time with her mother and take their dogs to the beach, things she once never made time for.

"It has put the business in perspective. I realise I can do other things on a weekend rather than just work."

PETER SLATTERY
Managing Partner, Johnson Winter & Slattery

When Peter Slattery and two colleagues established leading law firm Johnson Winter & Slattery in Adelaide in 1993, his hopes for the firm didn't extend past still being in business in four weeks' time. Now with close to 300 employees nationwide, JWS has far exceeded his vision.

When big business started to drift to the east coast over the following decade, the firm made the decision to go national, opening an office in Sydney in 2004, shortly followed by Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane.

As managing partner, Peter, 56, was going to have to spend a lot more time outside of South Australia. That meant some major adjustments were going to have to be made to family life.

Moving to Sydney with his young family of three boys, then aged 12, 10, and 8, and his wife, Melissa, a well-established gynaecologist, was one option, but shifting a busy medical practice interstate was going to be tough. With the boys settled in school, there was no way that a family move added up to a good idea.

The original proposal was that it would be for an initial three years, the length of term agreed by the partnership for the role of managing partner. Each time the appointment was renewed and now they are seven years on and still commuting.

"It's always easier to know what we should have done in retrospect," says Melissa, 56.

"I think if I'd known it was going to go on for so long we would have all upped and moved to Sydney and made a clean sweep of it," she explains.

So, as the commuting lifestyle began in earnest, Melissa worked school hours and Peter tried to limit his time away from home to three days a week.

Melissa remembers her biggest problem from those school years was when Peter would return home and agree to a request of the children that she had just denied them. Playing parents off each other is a common children's trick but when communication is at a premium it can happen more often.

"I remember saying to Pete 'you have to talk to me first!' He was trying to be Mr Nice Guy because he was Mr Absent Guy," she says.

Entertaining on weekends dropped off, too. Coming home exhausted on a Friday night gave Peter little appetite for socialising.

"It was Pete's dream to come home to a house with nobody else there!" Melissa says.

Whenever they reached a point where they thought this lifestyle was madness, Peter's self-talk was practical.

"It is just circumstances, this is the way my work has gone. I'm looking to maximise the business opportunities that are there and this is what it's going to take. The trade-offs are worth it," says Peter.

Melissa wasn't always so convinced, recalling dealing with consecutive stressed Year 12 students by herself for much of the week. There were times when she thought Peter was living the charmed life. Now with the boys grown up, Melissa feels like she is the one living the charmed life, especially now the roles have been reversed with two of their sons having moved to Sydney and living with Peter during the working week.

"He sees more of the family than I do now," Melissa laughs.

Their working lifestyle has been one of the factors in Melissa choosing not to retire recently. Instead, she has recently grown her all-female medical practice, Aware Women's Health, which provides a complete health service for women. Now, with more doctors on board, Melissa has the flexibility to go to Sydney more often.

Peter likes escaping Sydney's rat-race coming home to Adelaide. Melissa is surprised how much she likes living here, having always thought she would prefer Sydney or New York.

"I find it easy and there are a lot of hard places to live. It's beautiful, we're comfortable, our friends are here - if they can remember who we are!" ●

WHY THEY LIVE HERE, BUT WORK AWAY...

Everyone's input on Adelaide's appeal

EDWINA JAMIESON

"When you don't live in Adelaide, you forget how amazing it is," she says. "We live up in the hills and it is so pretty. I miss the beautiful fresh produce and how you can live so healthily here. The restaurants and the wine. I miss the wine!"

CHRISTOPHER JAMIESON

"Adelaide is one of the great cities. As far as living, it doesn't get much better. It's so easy to get around, there's so much to do. It really is a wonderful place and after everywhere we've lived, Adelaide is my preference. There's also friends and family here. The only downside is jobs. The issue will be whether we can keep our kids here and there's a high chance we won't."

ANDY SHEA

"I'm one of Adelaide's biggest supporters. The lifestyle is fantastic, I absolutely love it here. I've worked all over the world and now, for where I am in my life, at 47 and with two little boys, for me there's no better place for them to be. I love the space they've got and the lifestyle. It's a gentle, safe place here."

NARELLE SHEA

"I feel better about the future knowing we have that block of land in the hills in terms of our children and the lifestyle it offers. It is beautiful, it has space and is perfect for the kids. We are committed to that non-conventional working lifestyle, I suppose, because we really want to be here and can afford to have a lovely house in the hills but we have to make sacrifices in other ways. It is probably the longest I've sat still - and kids do that to you!"

JODY ROWE

"Everything is so easy here. Anything you do - parking your car, its services, I don't think people realise how easy it is to get around. Getting to the airport is so easy, how brilliant is that? The coffee, the cost of living is so cheap."

PETER SLATTERY

"Whereas I think of my hometown as Adelaide, I work in Sydney. They offer vastly different lifestyles. Adelaide has space, it is an easy city to live in. I notice the difference when I get back. I love the South Australian lifestyle and the big attractions here. I'm an advocate for the quality of life here so I think lifestyle-wise it's fantastic. It is clearly much more affordable for people than Sydney or Melbourne but, in truth, certain opportunities just don't really exist in this state. If you want opportunities you have to move for them."