M: When did you first migrate you Australia?

H: That would be 7 years ago – 2012. So, that was the original 457. That was – I came to work as a postdoc.

M: What were the motivations?

H: So, the whole academic background means that you get some options. You weigh the options and then it’s kind of a given that you will probably be moving countries every time you get a different appointment. So, I suppose it’s a little bit idiomatic in that sense. The main factors we considered at the time – there were a few things. So, first of all, the job was great. So, I really wanted to do the thing. So, this was basically when I was still in my career of astronomy. I had already done a Postdoc in the US and I was looking for the next step. We didn’t really want to stay in the US and there were a few factors – a few reasons for that, and we were looking for places that had a few of the things that kind of annoyed us about living in the US. One of the – so there are a few logistical reasons – very mundane things, not really emotional things. There was, first of all, there’s 2 of us and there’s one job offer. My wife didn’t have a job offer so were like okay, what is a place that won’t hassle her for employment. And, at the time Australia was possibly the only place - that where the spouse visa was completely free. You could do whatever you like, you know, work. We would’ve had that only in the EU otherwise because I’m an EU citizen. We could go to the EU and me and my wife could work there – just defacto. No hassle. But, in other places that’s not the case. In other places that we’ve lived even, that’s not the case. So, yeah weren’t looking at going back to Europe then. We were looking for another adventure. So, in here it was possible for my wife to get a job. So, that worked really well. Another thing that I considered at the time was basically long-term career stuff. This is previous career, obviously in science. So, I was thinking, you know, what is the place where there is decent Science funding, and at the time it was very good. You know 2012 – there were all these fellowships, they were open to everybody. Different discussion – obviously that changed after we got here. So, I think the facts at the time were career specific, opportunities for both of us, a place where cost of living wouldn’t be a huge problem for a Postdoc salary. In the short term, we didn’t know what our plans would be for the long-term. Obviously, Postdocs don’t make enough to live here long-term, buy houses, and all that stuff but for a 3-year contract it seemed fantastic and it was very good. And then, there were some other considerations that were – like once all these boxes were ticked then we thought about bigger things, you know, what are the – I realised, as I say this, it was so nerdy, so statistically kind of informed. So, everything was looking at like society stats. What is the Gini coefficient in Australian society like, things like that, coz – slight tangent but we lived in Chile for a while. It was a wonderful experience to live but the inequality is something that bothered me every day there. Even though our jobs were the jobs that were creating more equality, it was still very difficult to live in a place like that. So, I didn’t want to move to a place that, again, there would be so much inequality. So, that was a consideration and those kind of things. That’s the stuff that pops to mind.

M: Where is home?

H: Greece. But I lived in Chile, in the UK for and US. It was all for Science. So, I went to the UK to study. Then, I went to Chile to do some extra projects for my PhD. Then I was in the US for a postdoc and UK for a postdoc. So, it was absolutely all for the Science career. Astrophysics. Now, [career] its so-called Data Science. So, umm, when was this, 4 years ago? Maybe May-ish, April, something like that of 15. I moved. Yeah, at that point everything changed. Now, the observatory I was working for doesn’t even exist anymore. It was a really famous observatory – like world famous research facility in Sydney. The headquarters were in Sydney. And, they disbanded the observatory. Thankfully, The Australian National University took over the telescope. So, the telescope is gone into good use. But, yeah, the shorter version of it is, the government changed a year after I moved, and everything changed. It was like, where there were all these opportunities, so much funding, the funding was cut. Where there were fellowships, the fellowship programs were cut and the ones that were maintained were only open to Australian citizens. So, I wasn’t eligible to apply for anything. So, essentially professorships maybe. I would’ve been eligible for professorships, but it wasn’t what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a researcher. So, it’s just, everything changed overnight. That was pretty traumatic. So, then I had to pretty much – what we thought at the time was – okay, do we want to move countries again, and just have to kind of start over once again, or do we like it here enough to just stick around and find another job? Which was obviously a huge decision you know. I decided to me an astronomer when I was 8 years old, so did Milly. That’s like 25 years of decision making at that point. Everything is geared toward being an astronomer and remaining in this field. So, to switch away from that was quite a big deal. I lost track of the original question. [laughs]. So, current profession, yeah. So, 2015 when my postdoc was about to expire and then I looked for another job and Data Science was kind of, the obvious switch coz a lot of places were hiring at the time, and it was becoming very trendy, and it was basically a job where I could do the data analysis, do the research, which is what I wanted to do in Astronomy, but would kind of, have to give up to be a professor anyway. So, then I worked at another company as a Data Scientist.

M: Planning

H: Yeah, there was a fair bit. The way it works in Astronomy – you get – there are so few jobs. I mean, the whole global community of Astronomers is about 5000 people. That’s it. We kind of all know each other. So, when you apply for jobs, it’s very unlikely that you get more than one offer, if you get any. So, you keep looking until you get an offer. So, I had yeah, there was an opportunity to stay in the US, go to California. I wasn’t thrilled about the specifics of that role, that Postdoc. And then, the opportunity to come here. And then, also I could’ve just kept looking. When this came about, it just sounded very exciting. So, there was a lot of consideration obviously. But, kind of the appeal of, you know – let’s just go to Australia for 3 years – great, let’s just do that. That really shortened the consideration time because we thought it would be a fun adventure. I’d never been here but, you know, people seem to have fun here, and lot of astronomers were coming here, and they would all just say, oh, you know, it’s a wonderful place. It seems like a good place to be. So, that kind of, shortened the decision time. But yes, there was a lot of consideration – the main consideration was, the main kind of rival in that thing was, trying to figure out something in Canada because we have a lot of colleagues there, and Canada was – the stuff that we starting going through after we got here – Canada has starting going through then. So, they had started restricting fellowships to citizens and things like that. So, we were very close to getting jobs in Victoria in Canada, which was what we really wanted at the time. It was our absolute dream and then the government changed there, and we couldn’t do that. So, with a few doors closing around the world, that also shortened the decision time. There just weren’t that many options. So, once things was, kind of a clear favourite, then we took a few weeks to figure out, really, just the appeal was there, but were just trying to figure out –just the logistics of it all. You know, astronomers are not like, money bag kind of people. It was extremely difficult to go through the process of how much cost and to get here, and make sure, that there’s a bank account, and there’s money somewhere – it was a big freak out. Very very difficult situation. So, it was big decision. We took all the time we had until the observatory wanted an answer.

M: Multiple options?

H: Right. What were told at the time, was that this was the only option. That wasn’t true. That was not the fact. Every time I’ve asked a question of people who are supposed to know what they are talking about, I get the wrong answer, and I make, I’ve made this mistake many times over the 7 years we’ve lived here. I trust somebody, some expert to tell me what to do, and I find out a year later that it was a terrible decision. It was completely wrong, and everything is just the worst-case scenario. I found out pretty much the day I landed here from one of my colleagues at ANU that – umm – this is a very high up person. He has a direct line to immigration case worker, whatever it’s called. When he wants to bring in somebody from abroad, he picks up the phone and gets that one person on the phone and says, I have a Postdoc, this is a brilliant person, and I need PR. That’s how it worked. Apparently. Yeah. That’s not supposed to happen. But that’s the story I was told. Yeah so, getting people on PR was possible but to me it was presented as absolutely, the only option you have is the 457 visa and then bla bla bla bla. So, Postdocs there were her for – I don’t know how that worked because on paper, that shouldn’t because there’s not ongoing employment. Postdocs are usually fixed term appointment. So, I don’t know how they did that. But yeah, bunch of people went to the ANU on PR directly.

M: Family and their role.

H: Yeah. So, that’s a very interesting topic. The decision was really, just my wife and I decided we would have this adventure, and probably just only stay here for 3 years because that’s how long the contract was. When we decided that – obviously my whole family are back in Europe. So, there’s nobody in this hemisphere even. So, that was definitely a consideration. So, in the beginning it was – oh this is only for 3 years and then ah we’ll see, we’ll probably go back to Europe because that’s a sensible thing to do. It hasn’t gone that way but at the time, I didn’t think so much about my family back home because I thought this was just a short-term thing and we’ll just get to experience it and probably move somewhere else close to home. Not to Greece. It was never a consideration, just realistically, it was never like that. But, yeah, it wasn’t, so I guess it was definitely part of the consideration. But, I guess, it was sort of, that’s okay because it was just a short-ish period.

M: Friends/community

H: No – we. Apart from professional contacts, we didn’t. And even there, uhh, well actually no. That’s interested. When we moved here, there was actually one person I knew at work whom I knew from the US, and but my wife, he whole – So, I don’t know how this happened. Nobody knows how this happened. So, her whole year, everybody who did their PhD at Oxford in her year were here when we moved here. Everybody her year, everybody the year above, everybody the year below. So many of those people were here doing Postdocs. So, yeah, my wife’s friend circle were already here. I can’t remember if we knew that or if that just happened at the same time. I can’t remember if everybody just moved at the same time as we did. I can’t remember if that was already known when we decided to move here. I think we knew that 1 or 2 people were here. Not like, 10 people. So, that was very lucky. That was the main kind of, social group in the first couple of years that we were here. All Postdocs – and then one or two people who moved here later had been Postdocs and then they moved into different jobs. They’ve all gone now. Mostly, they’ve all gone back to wherever, mostly back to the UK coz everything changed with the funding.

M: Visa process

H: Umm, that. So, I think I would’ve got the job offer around February and I think, the process was done by April or something. I remember booking flights and booking movers in April. My Postdoc there was ending in May, and we were… I remember we had like a 3-month, kind of runway, from the moment that we go to visa to having to be here. So, I think I was here something like the end of June. So, it would’ve been April when the thing was granted, and February was the job offer. So, couple of months – 6 weeks, 2 months. I remember it being very quick. I remember it being very cheap also at that time.

M: Skilled

H: I think my Science background is the skill. Its everything in that package, even if people don’t quite get what that means. That’s the skill. My aptitude of statistics and strategy in numbers, programming, that sort of thing. The original occupation, Physicist, was on the skills list. It isn’t anymore. Physicist can only be sponsored by universities now. Hence, I am on a 457 visa still.

M: Mapping

H: So, were in the US and we apply for a 457. This is February 2012. Then were granted this visa in April of 2012. Then, we’re here. We are scientists and I was granted a 2-year visa even though I had a 5-year contract or something like that. Everybody else got 5 years on their visa. So, same job title, same lab, same everything, except for the nationality, and I got 2 years on my visa, and the Americans got 5 years on their visa. [assessment levels] They told me that’s not what happened. That’s very good to know. That’s very interesting. Then 2-year visa. Then we had to renew. So, we renewed in May or April of 2014. Then, one year later, I moved to Data Science. And then I had to transfer the 457 across to my employer at the time. Then, a year later, probably a year later? Maybe a little bit less, we applied for PR as, what was the path, I can’t remember what it was called – something like direct entry on employer sponsorship and all that stuff. This must have been the direct entry stream or something. 187, maybe. Then we applied for 187 I think at Envizi. This was not the 2-year thing [being working for 2 years at an employer to be eligible for PR]. This was, I had to do the Vetassess. So, I did the skills assessment, and it was granted in 3 days and everyone was confused how it happened. Nobody knew why. Everything else was so difficult and Vetassess was just a matter of days. Oh no, I was thinking of another thing. But it was days. So, the lawyers were like, I guess you got lucky. So, the 457 renewal here was actually 2 days. So, let’s see, ah, this was also so much money bags because it went from like, $300 to $2000. This was out of pocket because this was for a government department. They were explicitly not allowed to pay for someone’s immigration expenses. They covered their side but then your visa expenses, they weren’t allowed to cover. When we came here the visa application was $300 and when we did the renewal, it had changed to $2000. I remember that clearly because $2000 to a Postdoc is an insane amount of money. Then, I got a job offer from here. So, we were waiting for our 6 months, for the PR, and I had to withdraw it because Atlassian said no, we’re not waiting for that. We’ll get you a new visa coz we don’t know how long its gonna take. It was already 6 months that we were waiting, so it might have been a matter of days. We were on a bridging visa but the 457 was still going at the time but I suppose it wasn’t transferable anymore. Yeah, so then, drop 187 application. When was that? I started here in October 16. So, this would’ve been let’s say September. So, we withdraw this application, and then October, new 457 visa. Then we get to November of 18 and we applied for PR for whatever the pathway is – the sponsored. So, that’s the present. We’re just waiting. We’ve been waiting for what – 8 months.

M: Decision of dropping the PR

H: It was so hard, so hard. It felt so close and probably was. It probably was a matter of days. But yeah, the people here were completely rigid. They said no, we’re not waiting. It was at the time, it seemed like a very reasonable thing to do because the pay rise was more than considerable. In fact, the way things have turned out with the stock price, the pay rise was 100% - I’ve doubled my salary. So, it was a good decision. So, that was the consideration at the time – it was good money. But it was also about quality of work and all that. That hasn’t really changed. The work that I do here and the work that I did at Envizi – it was pretty much, you know, there are good days and there are bad days. There isn’t much difference in work for Data Science. So, that was the main driver at the time because I didn’t know how the financial side of it was go because, in terms of base pay, it was very small difference. But the stock price makes a huge difference. The main thing was also this place the work is going to be a whole other level. That hasn’t paid off, but the actual pay has paid off.

M: Tell me about your wife as well in terms of visa.

H: Has been on a dependent visa throughout which is an awesome visa – completely unrestricted visa. She’s been able to get her own job from day one without any restrictions. It’s a better visa than my visa.

M: Commercial Services

H: So, let’s see. Last time I made a little mental value of how much this has cost us over the years, it was about $20,000 that we had spent already on immigration. And this doesn’t count the money that the lawyers here are gonna charge – I think that’s gonna be like 5-6k as well for the lawyers here. And, I also haven’t tallied the cost of a bunch of translations and things I needed to do. So up until essentially, up until we changed to the commercial sector, we didn’t really use, essentially any services, we did everything ourselves because of course, Postdoc pay. Up until this point I don’t even think I had to translate anything. So, one side of it is that it was very favourable conditions in academia because essentially, the university vouches for you. Back then, the university was allowed to say, look this person has written academic papers, they can speak English, no language tests, Bye, and they were given that think. Whereas, I don’t think they can do that anymore. In the commercial sector they don’t. It was either when I transferred my visa or when I applied, ah yes, so when I applied for the 187, I had to get language tests, that was IELTS, which was basically a scam as far as I can tell. There’s just one provider, and they just make up a grade that doesn’t give you the top tier English. I’ve taken the test 3 times and I’ve had different grades each time. I’ve asked for remarks and they say, oh, I don’t know, this is your mark. IELTS also cost probably $2000 or something. I took the test 3 times and it expired I guess, and then I had to get a remark because they gave me a ridiculous mark and said my reading comprehension wasn’t good. And, there were mistakes in the questions. I was reading the test and there was a 2-part question and they said, basically, the structure of the question was assertion – based on this assertion tell me this. The assertion was incorrect. You read the question and the assertion is incorrect. They say “these researchers are performing investigations on these things”. No, other researcher in you article are doing this investigation. How do I answer this question? It’s gonna be wrong. It’s a scam. I have very strong opinions about this. I mean, I spoke to so many people while we were waiting. And it’s not only that. I mean, it’s a scam, there’s only one provider, obviously there’s politicians getting bribes here. Like, I come from a country where people tell you there’s a bribe. Here, they don’t tell you. But, it’s a bribe. There’s only one provider. But they were testing people – I was chatting to a guy from South Africa who obviously grew up speaking English. He was an Anglo-South African and he needed the test to do a PhD. To start a PhD program. Oh, don’t get me started on IELTS. Many emotions there. They’re also so rude. All the staff were horrifically rude. I mean, you can’t take a water bottle in there. You can’t go to the bathroom for 5 hours. I mean who do these people think they are? It feels as though, all the times I was randomly detained in the US, they put you in a little room with a small TV with Fox news playing, and there’s no remote, and it’s on high you try to just reach the off button. That’s the feeling I got in the IELTS room. It’s quite detention-y. You feel like a criminal. So, okay, up until, the whole academic time, no commercial services used. We do everything ourselves. When they transferred the 457 visa, here there’s a migration agent but the company paid for that. So, this is Envizi. Then, with the VETASSESS, again, there’s a migration agent, and then I and to pay for VETASSESS myself. I had to take the IELTS test, which also the agent didn’t realise I had to do until literally a week before the deadline which was stressful. Actually, at this point Physicist was on the list but the migration agent told me it wasn’t an option. So, I asked, can I do a self-sponsored thing? He said, normally you would but you don’t have a profession that doesn’t allow you to do that. That was incorrect completely. I mean, I would’ve had a PR years ago – 4 years ago and then, at the same time my actual profession at the time, which was an Analyst, I wasn’t actually, on paper, I wasn’t qualified as an Analyst for the points system. So, I couldn’t apply under some archaic title – operations analyst or something from the 80’s. That would be the profession but for that you need a degree in that, which doesn’t exist by the way. Or, you would need something like 2 years of practice in that field but at that time my whatever, 10 or 12 years of Physics didn’t count because I wasn’t an Analyst on paper. So, I was eligible for this direct entry, 187 thing, whatever it was. That was the only thing at the time. They made it impossible for me to apply as a skilled worker independently as an Analyst even when I had 2 years because they changed the rules. So, at that point, this is where the big money comes in. There’s also a lot of money for translations here. Not education – that was all in English. But, birth certificate, things like that. And of course, the agent is paid. Police checks, yeah, of course from each country. Thank God I didn’t need one from Chile, because technically I didn’t live there. I wasn’t there, I didn’t have a visa there. I was just visiting there for my research and I had a time limit – like, I wasn’t there for a year. But, my wife was, which is a bundle of joy now, a current blocker for our PR. They are asking for documents that they know cannot be obtained. Police checks from Chile. When my wife lived there – we actually met there – she was a diplomat, on a diplomatic visa. Scientists in the government agency where she was working there get a diplomatic visa, the car, and the house, the whole shabang. What that means is 2 things. There is no trace of you in police records. They don’t allow to have a trace because you’re a diplomat unless you’ve done some serious crimes, I guess. I don’t know what kind of treaties are in place for that. But, yeah, and then. But, when you leave the country, you have to relinquish your ID – your super-duper special ID that you can flash to people to get out of parking violations I guess, I don’t know why people use that. So on one hand you don’t have police records, on the other you almost didn’t exist there apart from your employers assertion that this person was a diplomat here. So, now they know – like, theyre asking for a photocopy of her ID card – the special ID card. They know that we can’t get that. I don’t know what’s gonna happen but this is the current stage that we’re in. We have a letter from her employer, signed, like, everything, with like the official seal. This is an international treaty organisation that’s putting a stamp on a piece of paper. That already was difficult to get. No, not enough. They wanted to get every bit of communication to prove that we’ve tried to do this. They wanted every bit of written communication between us and the people who tried to help us out in Chile with a statutory declaration and everything. Actually, they didn’t ask for that. Our lawyer said, do that and it will probably work, and they’ve been sitting with that for 3 months now. They’ve asked for it twice. You provided this but you didn’t provide this. I was like, umm, you didn’t read the thing we provided. That’s very reassuring. So, we’ve essentially the same documents twice because they asked for it twice. So, anyway, now all of these intermediate things are peppered with these delightful experiences of going to the lawyers. They’re very good – the lawyers that we use here – thankfully. Unlike the migration agent at the previous place. So, I’ve got to the lawyers several times with a stack of papers that have costed thousands of dollars to precure, dropping them on the desk, and they go, literally this morning everything changed, or literally, 3 days ago everything changed. So, I’m beginning to slowly slip into conspiratorial thinking because they know its gonna take about 6 months to get your documents. Even if you move at the fastest possible pace, that’s how long it takes to get a document from another country. So, they change everything every 6 months. At some point - I didn’t actually finish this project – I started writing an algorithm coz they do have to by law, post everything on their website right? So, I would parse through all those documents and see how much stuff changed and how frequently it changes. I should have finished that project. I never did. I got too frustrated with the whole process. So yeah, it changes basically frequently enough that you just have no chance of getting the document together. That’s our experience with PR here in the last one year. So, what else have we paid for? Medical tests. Terrible health insurance. I had to go to the hospital a few months ago. I had a kidney stone, and I had to go to the hospital. This is the only one option that we have for health insurance with the 457 visa. They won’t even pay for the hospital. What do you think, I got kidney stones for fun? The most recent message is like, oh you should claim that on Medicare. You don’t understand what you do, do you? I’m sure they’re other things – oh notarizing documents also. Also, that’s more or less the things that cost money. Those processes had to be done multiple times. I’ve got like 5 FBI checks because it takes them so long to process things, I need to go get another one just in case. I’ve got probably 4 UK police checks. I’ve got like, a dozen AFP police checks. Thankfully, the FBI changed their system and you can do it online now. But it used to be, you had to go, get your fingerprints done, actually no, that’s still the case. The police officer has to take your fingerprints at the precinct, and they have to send the envelope out. So, they have to do all these logistics. So it could take anywhere between 6 and 9 months to actually issue the certificate. So in 4 months, we would reapply because we thought that by the time the case worker got to the case, we would go over the year and need a new one. So, go to the police station, get the police check done, then the FBI sends a piece of paper through Auspost that probably gets lost, and they say, oh your pinky is not visible. Send a new one. Like this, is 1890 or something. But thankfully they changed this in the last 6 months and the only complicated part is the finger printing.

M: Friends, family, greater community?

H: So, I’ve never been surrounded by mostly Australians the whole time I’ve live here. The very few good scientists, or scientists that Australia produces go abroad mostly. The majority of Scientists that are trained here don’t work here. So, the import is how they make up for that shortfall. So, at the observatory, there was my boss and one colleague and that’s it. That’s all the Australian’s. Apart from that, everyone else, all the other postdocs, apart from that one guy, were from all over the place. Then when I moved to Envizi, I think there were only 2 Australians among 25 other people there. I mean, Australian born Australians. No, Actually, the 2 people Im thinking about came here as children. I don’t think anyone was born here in Australia. So, very international. So, technology sector, it was very international. Now, were beginning to produce the talent here, beginning. Here, is the same. We have junior developers who are Australians and some junior designers, I guess but mostly everybody is from abroad. All the analysts I work with, there’s quite a few people in the Analytics department, umm, were from all over the place. And then, somehow, even the things that we did as pastime hobbies, whatever, we were part of a couple of Karate, martial arts communities, and even those communities were all immigrants. The community on Deewhy where there were 3 Australian and everybody else were imports like us including the instructors. The people that started the community are from South Africa. We are actually really good friends. The one that we go to now, they are from Peru. So, somehow, not because we sought out immigrant communities, but the majority of people around us are immigrants. At most, they the children of immigrants. I don’t know that I know any Australians who are not the children of immigrants. Apart from a couple of people in – when you live on the North Shore – that’s the only place where weve met people who’s parents were born – in fact, No, nobody’s parents were born in Australia. I don’t know anybody who’s parents were born here. I don’t think I’ve met anybody. And I never tried for that to happen. I mean obviously we seek out things but not at work, not when you’re at a Karate class. This is gonna sound really mean and kind of, this is not gonna sound very good. But I don’t - I can’t think of many fundamentally Australian activities that I wanna be a part of. Like, what am I gonna do? I don’t gamble, I don’t surf, I don’t drink heavily, like, what am I gonna do. Like, those are fundamentally Australian, Australian things. Like, I don’t do these things. So, the things that I do are – and I know how pretentious and snobbish this is gonna sound – but yea, all of the things that I do, their foundation, their roots are in, essentially, old world culture. Is this thing a painting? – Im interested. Does this thing involve music? – Im interested. But those are not things that originate here. Those are not the things that people do here. And I know how snobbish that sounds, and I don’t mean it to be this way. I’m not a snob about Australia. Australia is a great place. I’m just not interested in those things. It’s like golf. I know difficult. I know, it’s kind of amazing. I just don’t care. I don’t care if golf is difficult. I still don’t find it interesting or important. So, the past few experiences have been handled by lawyers, so I haven’t done much of that. The first time, my wife, the saint that she is, she took care of that. She was like, you know, you got the job, the paperwork – I’ll take care of that which is also a very nice thing. Also, I freak out about paperwork. She’s much better at that. So, yeah, so mili did that. The first time, it didn’t feel that daunting. The second time when we were renewing our visa at the observatory, I think it was significantly more complicated. I seem to remember that. And then the lawyers took care of it. So, all I had to do is fill out their form, and then they went and adapted that into the official form. Anytime I had to look up something for that, it was like reading Sanskrit. It was just, I had no idea what’s going on. So, I definitely relied on the lawyers. The thing is that I relied on migration agents too much and I thought that Im not gonna ask everybody how they did these things because im not gonna bother them because we have this expert. Ofcourse, when I brought things up with people because they would ask, hey how’s it going with PR, did you get it? So, after we applied for this 187, and spent all this money, I remember having a drink with this friend of mine and he asked a question and I was like you know, Physicist is not on the list and we had to do all this other stuff. He says what are you talking about. Physicist is absolutely on the list and he just goes on his phone and goes here it is – it’s on the list. I was just gonna jump of the roof coz it was so expensive and so complicated and it handcuffed me to my employer which I didnt like. I was very happy there at the time but I did not like the idea at all of being tied to an employer because – this is not what happened, everybody was really nice – but as soon as they know that you’re handcuffed there, they can do whatever they like, and what are you gonna do, leave? It is the same situation here but there was no other option for me. This is the only way we could apply for PR. There was absolutely no other choice. We were gonna apply again, this time last year, July last year is when I had all the requisites and points and all the requirements, and that’s when they took the operations analyst, the something something off the list. So, I didn’t qualify. Now they, I think they said, that they would bring in this tech worker category, but I don’t think they did that, and I would absolutely qualify under that if they were no bring it in. And also, actually, one other thing changed in the meantime. So my wife also changed from Astronomy around the same time as I did. Actually no, about a year later, and she wanted to do technical writing. They changed her profession and bumped it down to the short-term list. So, we couldn’t apply through her, and she’s an American citizen so we would’ve gotten much better treatment. But, she’s no longer eligible for PR because technical writer was bumped down to the 2-year list.

M: Technology

H: Online searches have been more confusing than anything. Part of that is that there are all these migration agents who are fishing for clients and they will only give you half-truth. So, you’re looking for a yes or no answer to a very simple question and they say yes and no. So, you pay them some money for consultation on the phone. Oh, actually, this reminds me, we did use another migration agent at some point because I completely lost trust in migration agent in my previous company. So, we actually did pay a bunch of money to another migration agent to confirm what this person was doing because we lost trust completely. And this was through a network, our freiemds who are also immigrants told us this person, she knows everything. That was very good. We were seeking advice about a few things, very confidentially – we were asking if we apply through an employer and leave the day the PR happens, what’s the worst-case scenario? Do we get our PR taken away, do we get deported, what’s gonna happen? So, we were seeking an answer to that question. And again, nobody has the answer to that really. It seems to happen all the time, but the risk is high. So, that was back in the previous company.

M: Community services?

H: I mean, it factors in some ways, in the community sense. So, you know, we go to Synagogue and people say, are you citizens yet, and they joke about it, and that made it a lot easier. Coz, its like, everything’s gonna be okay, don’t worry about it. So, it factors in that way. Its not something we sought out. Again, Synagogue is like 2 Australians. Number 2 is obviously facetious coz I keep saying it but again, there’s no Australians there. Its people from all over the world and I don’t know how that happened.

M: Next steps?

H: Bridging visa – the underlying 457 goes to 2020 something, umm, yeah. That’s the visa we got through Atlassian so that’s the one with the maximum duration. People get PR within like a month here normally. We actually had to leave the country between the visas. We went to New Zealand for a month coz we thought, they said, it would take anywhere between 3-8 weeks. So, we were like, let’s just book a month. We got a call 2 days later. 2 business days later and they said oh your visa’s been granted. You can come back now. Is said but can I stay though. I think its just priority. I think Atlassian applications go on top of the pile. I don’t have a way to explain it. I know that they’re very good friends with the government, the CEO’s here. I’m sure that helps.

M: Have you provided any migration advice?

H: Yes, Ive told my brothers. My brothers are both in the UK. One of them has a UK passport. The other one is in the process of getting one because they’ve both been there for so long. So, I was prodding them to do that because then they can come here on a work and holiday visa. So, my little brother is about to do that. Im sure he’ll come alomg for the adventure. Ive never felt qualified to provide advice. I’ve kind of pointed people toward and away from migration agents and that kind of thing. Someone came in and asked me, you wouldn’t know by any chance about this migration agents, and I was like yeah we’ve used them, they’re terrible, run away.

M: Migration elsewhere?

H: We are thinking about it now. Again, obviously this is very very confidential. We are planning on NZ at some point. NZ is what we thought Australia is, I think, for a number of reasons. Plenty of disillusionment but that’s not really a reason. That would be a silly reason to move. Really, its just how expensive it is here. We don’t really, even though we are very, very well paid here. I’m pinching myself everyday with my Science background about this but its still not enough to buy a house, to have the kind of life we want. We’re not Australian, we don’t have family here. Its not like were gionna move to another city in Australia. That’s not meaningful to us. We could move to Adelaide but why move to Adelaide. That’s one extra flight to go home. Why would I do that? NZ, Wellington specifically is the right size of town for us. It’s the perfect compromise because I grew up in the country side so I would live in the woods if I could. Mili grew up in New York so it’s a litte different but shes getting tired of big cities too. So, small cities is kind of a perfect compromise. Its culture – one of the things that really – uhh – I cant – I, how, I mean we go to the Art Gallery in NSW every time we have a visitor and – this has happened like 2 or 3 times – I walk into the Art Gallery of NSW and I say to my visitor, I need to run to the bathroom but what you need to do is go down the stairs and to the right and at the far end of the gallery take another right, that’s the gallery you wanna go see coz theres one gallery basically, in Sydney and I know it like the back of my hand. I don’t like it. I wanna go to a gallery and see different things. That’s a very old world sort of view of the world should be about. It is not Australia’s view and I don’t begrudge it. Australia has many other things that are amazing but not for me. Theyre not amazing to me. They still don’t make up for the shortfall of traditional culture, the things I want. It’s a much friendlier place as well. Our decision was reinforced by a million times after the horrible thing that happened in Christchurch and the response that they had there. Ive never seen a people, a society react so well to something so bad. I mean, the US went on a wold wide killing spree after 9-11. These guys have the worst crime that’s ever been committed there and somehow everyones wants to move there after the response. We were actually there at the time after that happened, and we get there, and it’s a really grave atmosphere. But, people are going about their business. We were in Wellington, not in Christchurch. We were talking to everybody and everybody’s having conversations about it and saying you know, how oh you know, im gonna send a little book to the mosque tomorrow. We were in tears the whole time we were there because it was the most beautiful human reaction to something bad that had happened. It was extraordinary. That really reinforced this desire to move that. And it’s a place we can afford a house. People in politics get in the way of things here all the time. Its not a progressive country which is fine. I don’t have to live in the most progressive place. That’s ok. But when it becomes, like, refugees are in concentration camps, and we refuse to put solar panels in our eternally sunny country because our friends in coal won’t make enough money – that’s pretty much the 2 most significant things in my world right now. You know, basically destroying the, like, it’s like a proper existential threat to humanity and this country is doing the exactly the opposite of what it should be doing, and I just dont wanna be here because of that. I know that leaving is not the answer. Staying here and having the opportunity to vote – in however many years they let me do that – would be a way to combat that. The climate change stuff, Im not gonna be waiting for 4 years to become a citizen to combat that. Im gonna go to a place where I can contribute to that sector, and they have a huge renewable sector in NZ. In fact, they run most of the renewables from Australia – wind farms, hydro, and solar – most of the actual commercial capacity is run by Australian companies. So, I could actually go an contribute there instead of being a drag here because every time I put the heater on, I’m screwing up the environment. Im not gonna freeze in the cold either. Yeah, its politics that is driving us away. It also, I felt this on a personal level whe I first got here – how can these people vote for One Nation? People we know, people in Karate, were like oh well not you, like all the other riff-rafs. It was infuriating. I just wanted to punch the wall, and I did sometimes. It was exasperating and I took that on a personal level. I don’t anymore. But now I see it as a big societal issue. This really is a thing. People don’t feel so strongly about there being horrific racists in their family. They’re like, whatever, Ah, uncle Tim’s a racist, some people are racists, ah, its fine. Or I’m not really a racist, I just want sensible immigrants to come here. Get out of here!

M: Future plans?

H: Because PR here gives us work rights in NZ. 4 years of presence in the country but yeah, we’ll seek citizenship in NZ. Here it’s a completely unknown – how long it would take. In principle its one year. In practice it won’t. Coz you have to have 12 months of presence in the country before you’re eligible to apply. Then it can be months. Sometimes they say ah yeah sure, and then it can be months or years until your citizenship ceremony, which is when you actually become a citizen. So, it could be 3 years. So, meh, I’ll wait an extra year and be in a place that I really like. That’s the plan.