M: When did you first migrate to Australia?

L: I arrived on the 28th of February, this year, in Sydney, and we were here for a week before I started. I started the following week – my job here.

M: So this is your first time here?

L: I came to Australia first in 2001, on a working holiday visa, a backpacking visa, and absolutely loved it. I had some family in Brisbane. So, it was almost like a rite of passage for my cousins – we all came here, and absolutely loved it, and always wanted to come back. And then, kind of, life gets in the way. I got married, I got 3 kids, and had work and it just so happened, I had a really bad day at work and saw a job advertised here. I though oh, that’s quite exciting. Shall I apply, and my husband said, oh just apply. What have you got to lose – not thinking I would actually get the post. But, I got it and ended up coming back here. He’d also done backpacking here – he’d been over on a year visa. Not at the same time as be, but yeah. So, he knew what he was coming into as well. So, I flew into Sydney when I arrived the first time and didn’t like it. It felt like, it was a city that could’ve been anywhere in the world. It didn’t really feel like Australia to me at that time, and I had two weeks here, then before I went on travelling around in Australia. But then, when I came back home, I had another 2 weeks in Sydney, and I actually loved it. It was just that I had been around, and kind of knew what to expect. I don’t know what my expectations were when I first arrived. But, I don’t know what I was expecting actually. The city didn’t provide that the first time. But when I came back, it did.

M: What was it?

L: I think it just didn’t have an identity. I don’t think – I just felt like I could’ve been in London, I could’ve been in Paris or Amsterdam, and it was just a city. But I guess, it was my first time travelling, first time away from home, didn’t really know anybody, didn’t know what I was supposed to be doing. So, I went backpacking by myself. So it was me in a new city, and.. but I think by the time I came back around, I had a better idea of Australia. I had a better idea of myself I think. I had to go back and finish my undergraduate. So, I was only here for a year. In fact, it just just short of a year and I knew I had to go back and finish my degree. So, wasn’t an option to stay, and at that time it was only a 1-year visa. They didn’t have this 2-year option that they have now, and it was that whole thing to having to have money in the bank to show that you have funds to travel – so I think, I had to have, like a 1000 pounds in the bank before I could get my visa to come back, and then I didn’t have any as a student. I didn’t have any money. So, my mum and dad put money in my account so I could show them, to get my visa. It was a good experience.

M: Planning?

L: So, we – So, I’ve always talked about coming back, and coming over with the kids, and in 2012, 2011 actually – we came across for a month. We went to Perth in Western Australia, for a month over Christmas for a holiday. That’s was when I thought, okay we have a bit of money – lets have a good holiday. And, at the back of my mind, I was like, lets have a holiday, lets just see if we could do this. Could we stay here. We had a great month, and then we came home and my father-in-law died. So, my mother-in-law was by herself, and my husband said, theres no way we can even think about going away, now that shes by herself. So, that kind of went on the backburner. I think it had always been at the back of my mind. My husband was sort of forced into it this time – coerced into it. I think there was always a plan, not sure if I’d actually realise it though. Didn’t think it would actually happen. Coz as my kids get bigger, there’s the thing about school, and so there was a kind of plan, that I didn’t know for sure was gonna happen…if that makes sense? So, my kids are 14, 12, and 9 – 2 in high school and one in primary. So, when we had come over for a holiday, my kids loved it – absolutely had a ball. So, I’d kind of been working on that – last couple of years, like, oh – how good would it be to live in Australia, and they are really outdoorsy. So they all surfed in Scotland. So, they all could imagine surfing in Australia. So, they definitely helped pave the way – I think they were definitely open to the thought of moving elsewhere. My husband was working. He’s a carpenter to trade but he was working in the offshore oil industry. So, he was working away for 3 weeks, home for 3 weeks, and he hated it – absolutely hated it. So, he was looking for an excuse to leave there. So, I think, I used that to my advantage as well. I think that timing worked really well with this post coming up. We had been feeling really unsettled, and maybe a change would be good. And, then my mother in law is now, has a new partner, and she lives half the year in Canada as well. Edmonton, no – my brothers in Edmonton. Shes in London, Ontario. So, that was kinda not an issue anymore either. So, it all kind of feel in place. And also my sons 14 – so it was almost like now or never because he was gonna enter exams at school. So, if we didn’t go kinda soon, then we wouldn’t get to go..

M: Professional background?

L: Okay – Im a senior lecturer in design and innovation here. So, Im 40:40:20 contract here so, 2 days research, 2 days teaching, and a day of service. So, I’ve been doing that for the past 4 years. I’ve been in a teching research role with Glasgow school of Art in Scotland. But I’ve kind of.. this is.. kind of … different patchwork of things I would say. So, my undergraduate was in Design, and you cant do very much with a design degree, not at that time anyway. So, I left my undergraduate and went to work as a curator on an Island – so I moved to an Island – a tiny, remote Scottish Island, at the age when all the people, as 21 are leaving the island. So, it was really, a good experience but it was really hard t break into the community coz everybody goes, you know. They grow up on an island and cant wait to leave, and I was joining it. I was there for a couple of years. And then I moved back home and worked in the local government for about 4 or 5 years, in policy. So, I did policy development. And at that time I went back and did my Masters in Policy development and management. It was quite interesting how policy was written, and then got frustrated with local government, and also I had my kids at the same time. So, went free-lance and did some project management for Arts and Cultural projects, and I did that for about 10 years, and then saw a PhD position. It was in cultural policy, and I thought that’s really quite interesting. I’m kind of a really curious person and cant imagine not learning. So, I applied for this PhD position – never got it. So, I was gutted. Then they phoned me a couple of weeks later and said that we’ve got this other PhD, not in cultural policy, but in design innovation – you might be interested? So, I jumped on it. So, I did my PhD as part of a larger design project that involved 5 Art schools, it was a national project and my PhD – So, I was funded for 3 years, and my PhD fund had run out after the 3rd year and I wasn’t finished. So, I had to work full time from there. So, my PhD took 6 years. But I finished, and then for the past 4 years I’ve been working on this digital health project.

M: When you were considering Australia, were there other countries in mind?

L: No – I would never even consider anywhere else. Although, now that I’m here, I’m a bit more open to considering other countries. I don’t think I could ever have imaged – there wasn’t a big enough reason for us to go anywhere else. But now that I’m here and I can see how easily my kids have settled, I’ve become more open to that. I mean, we could go anywhere. I’m not sure my husband feels the same way. But, I feel that we could go, you know, I’m much more open to moving places now that I’ve moved once.

M: Was it always going to be Sydney?

L: I wasn’t fussed about where in Australia. It could’ve been anywhere. Although, the lure of Sydney was the post. So, I’ve come from a small specialist Institute, and the focus there was just design. And, my research is a bit trans-disciplinary design – so across faculties, across institutes. So, the offer of the university here was that of course, it’s a huge university, and there’s lots of faculties. So, lots of opportunities for cross-over.

M: Planning the move

L: It all happened very quickly. So, I applied for the post in October, and I had a skype interview in, at the end of November. I actually applied for a different post. I never got the different post. So, I had a second interview and they said, no I didn’t get the post, but they have this other post – if you’re interested. I said I might be interested in that. So that was the end of November and they said, well can you come out and look at the campus, come visit us and see if you like it. So, they flew me out in the second week of December to have a look around. So, I spent a week meeting everybody, deciding if it was or wasn’t what I was going to do. That was 8th of December. So, they had offered me the post, given me the contract. I had to accept it by, I think, the 18th of December before everybody broke off for Christmas, so that they can start the visa process. So, that was the 18th or 20th of December. I said yes, okay we’ll definitely take the post, we’ll make the move, subject to the visa of course. The visa came through, so yes – that was Christmas time, the school closed, and I was still getting emails from HR requesting all the information. They sent me a long list of everything they needed. I needed to get the police checks, I needed to have all the birth certificates, all the addresses where you’ve stayed, copies of my qualification, and all that kind of paperwork, and all the kids birth certificates and all because they were gonna sponsor us all to come over – and before Christmas. And, they did their part of the visa application, and I got an email on the 3rd of January from the immigration office just asking me to submit my part of the visa application, and the money – pay my part of it, and the visa came through in a week. So, it was crazy fast. By the time we came back to work after Christmas in January, the 15th of January, we were getting ready to go. Although I hadn’t handed in my notice at that point because I couldn’t hand in my notice if I didn’t know my visa was gonna come through. So I went back to my old job in January and handed in my notice and asked them how long do you want me to work for. I’m meant to have 3 months of a leave time before I hand in my notice, and they said okay fine, if you can finish your teaching then you can go whenever. So, I handed in my notice with a finish date of 23rd of February – was gonna be my last day at work, which was a Friday and then we flew out on Saturday. Must be the 24th. So I only had, really, that kind of 6 weeks from Christmas to when we actually left to fly and everything, sell our house, everything. We only came out suitcases – sold everything. We’ve stolen a room at my parents house for things I couldn’t sell at that time, and things that I wasn’t sure that I want to get rid of you know, that type of thing. But it was quite cathartic – just stuff you accumulate over 20 odd years.

M: Organizing stuff here?

L: That was crazy. So, when I came over in December for my visit, I kinda had a couple of days where I thought I’m gonna go have a look at what’s available apartment wise or house wise. I did 2 or 3 viewings and I almost cried. None of the houses were good – they were just awful. The problem was that we left a beautiful house in Scotland. We’d renovated it, and a huge huge house, and I know I wasn’t gonna get something like that here. It’s a city. We came from a rural, coastal village. So, I started to panic. And the university sent me, as part of my welcome pack, and it had, I got some relocation expenses for moving us over for our flights and towards our visa, and also they offered to reimburse an agent, or some kind of help with finding a house. The limit was $10,000 – 10000 or 5000 – It was $15,000 altogether and we could choose to spend that however – like using a relocation agent or a housing agent, or however we wanna use that relocation money. But actually our flights were about $12,000 alone. So, I couldn’t spend on a relocation expert. So, we just had to kind of do it ourselves online which was crazy. Because its so expensive and particularly coming from the UK, where the wages are not nearly the same as what they are here. So, having to find the money that we can put down for a month’s accommodation, and visa cost, and – coz I knew I would have to wait for 2 months to claim it back from the university. So I begged, borrowed and stole from parents and – until we had enough to pay for our first months accommodation. So we ended up booking an Airbnb for the first month in Lilyfield – its towards Rozelle. So, we got an Airbnb there for the first month and it was nice, it was a house, 3 bedrooms, so the little ones were together and my son had a room to himself, and it was close enough to university for me to commute – it was 20 minutes by bus. So, it was actually perfect. It did the job, and then in that time we had to find something permanent. It was really difficult. We – and I think more difficult for my husband coz he had done all the renovation so he didn’t want to live anywhere that wasn’t as good as what we had. So, really not a lot available. We looked eveuywhere. We looked at apartments, and we looked at houses. We looked all over Sydney. And the problem was I didn’t know what suburb we wanted to be based in. I forget what its called but theres a site online where you can check the suburbs and theyre given ratings. Its not Domain – I know that site the back of my hand, Ive been on it, you know, constant. Theres another site – I cant remember if its know your suburb or… you can type in, like you can search all the Australian suburbs and its gonn agive you ratings for family friendly, or convenience, or distance from the city. And we ended up scouting that and finding out which suburbs might fit, and in the end we – that last week of our Airbnb, we still hadn’t found anything. So everyday – and I was working at that time – so it was up to my husband and the kids to go look. So everyday, my husband was looking. Every evening, we were just going to viewing after viewing after viewing. And we wanted to be in the Northern beaches. We wanted to be next to the water, and on the last Wednesday before we were due to leave the Airbnb, we said right – we can’t find anything in the Northern beaches, where else can we go. And somebody here said, well have you looked down in Sutherland shire, coz you know the beaches down there. So, we said okay lets go down and see all the open viewings that day and so we went down to Cronulla, and Caringbah, and we saw one house that was perfect. It was a brand new built, 5 bedrooms – so enough bedrooms for everybody, had a swimming pool, and it was the same price as what we were looking for apartments in the city. So, I was just like, this is just amazing. We took it on the spot. So we took it for a 2 year lease. So, there’s another – as part of our searching, I had set a radius from the university of an hour’s public transport, just basically drew a circle. I just wanted it to be an hour maximum. So, I am pretty much just an hour door to door. 40-minute train ride and 10 minutes walk each side.

M: Family

L: I think my parents are finding it quite difficult – particularly difficult because I’m the eldest of 4 and we’re all in 4 different continents. So, my brother is in Canada, my sisters in West Africa, Im in Australia, and just one brother at home with my parents. My mum and dad – I was the first one to have kids, so they’re really close to my children. When I was doing my PhD, I had to travel 2 hours to university. So, my mum used to come down at 5 in the morning to let me go for the 6 o’clock train, and she would leave the kids to school, then go to her work and come to mine after work, and give them their tea, and put them to bed, and get home at like 10 o’clock at night. So, she had a lot to do with my kids. They find it really difficult. But, they’re also supportive. They’re happy to – and I had told them that I had applied this job in Australia. They were just like – oh what has she got on her head this time. And then when I got it, my mum was excited, but my dad was very quiet. My dad is never quiet. But it’s been fine. They’re coming out in October so that’s really good. It was also difficult.. so, I come from a huge, massive family. My dad’s one of 11 children, and my great granny is still alive. She’s 97. So, 11 kids and then there’s 38 grand-children that are my generation, and 36 great grandchildren – the generation before, and we’re all over the world. Theres some in Australia, some in Singapore, some in America and Canada. So, she was really happy for us. She was really really just so excited. My other grandmum, so my mums mum – Shes gonna be 90 this year. She’s had a lot to do with my kids as well. So they used to go to hers for tea couple of nights a week, and going to see her after school. But she found it really difficult when we told her. I think that I find that the most difficult part. My mum and dad are fine – they’re busy, they’re working, they’ve got a social life. But my granny – she doesn’t leave the house. So us going, I think she’s really going to miss the kids, and my son particularly, hes 14, and he you know, did a lot of baking with her, and you know, had a really close relationship. So, that was hard telling her. But everybody else, I think, was quite happy. It’s a close knit community there – so I think its about 700 houses. 2000 people. So everybody knows everybody, and I have a really close group of about 10 girlfriends, and all the kids are the same age, and it was hard telling them coz all the kids have grown up together, we’ve grown up together in a way I guess. But everybody was really positive. There was a few comments of you know, why are you going to the other side of the world? Why! Why!. Laughs.

M: Friends or community here?

L: I have a cousin who is sometimes based in Sydney. He works for an IT company. He manages their Australasian side. So he’s right across Asia and New Zealand and sometimes hes based here. So, I asked him for advice. But he’s a bit older than me, not married, and doesn’t have kids. So, he has a kind of, different perspective of Sydney than – So he was helpful because he provided an address that I could send my bank cards and things to, coz I was worried about things going to the Airbnb, and we’d already moved on. So, he could provide a permanent address that I could send important documents to. Apart from that, not really. I kinda just had to scour the internet for advice and all that. Some of the people I met here were really helpful. I got some emails as I was preparing, saying, you know, if there’s any questions, just let me know. Particularly, once they found out I had kids. Lots of people suggested things about school’s coz that was another problem right – where do we go to school. What’s a good school, do we move to a particular area to find a good school? They’re quire strict with the zoning, and the school systems are quite different. You’ve got your private schools, and you’ve got your selective schools, which weren’t open to us on our visa, so it was gonna be public schools. On our visa, my kids can’t get entry to selective school. We could pay for private school, or the public system. With 3 kids I can’t afford to pay for private schools, and my husband isn’t working yet. So, I’m the only one earning – so there’s no way. But, actually, we visited a couple of schools in the area – around the house, and we basically just ended up picking one.

M: Skilled visa

L: It is interesting. So when we were first coming out around, 2012, my husband would be the nominated skilled person that time coz I was in the middle of my PhD, and hes a carpenter. So, he would’ve had to do a skills test, and he refused to do a skills test. He said, I’ve been a carpenter for 20 odd years. Why would I need to go and show someone I can hammer a nail to prove myself – and he had to pay for that test as well. He was like, Im not gonna do that. So, that was a little block for us then. This time around, it was interesting because it isn’t called a skilled visa but they didn’t – apart from my qualifications, and a letter from my employer to say that I’ve been working in this capacity – that was the measure of the skill. It was interesting coz I, you know, my former employer, I got on really really well with him. So, they did really give me a good letter of reference. But I didn’t demonstrate my skills. You know, I just provided someone’s opinion of my skills. So, it was interesting for me to see how they imagine what skills are. How they articulate skills, particularly, in this context – you know in teaching, or design. They didn’t talk to any of my former students to find out if I was as skilled as I had mentioned. So, it was interested. I had to provide that letter from, as well as my reference, a letter from my employer to say that yes – I’d been working in the capacity of a senior lecturer position. I had over an x amount of time and had managed to demonstrate the skills required to perform that role. But they gave me a template for that letter for my employer to fill in. I think that was the university. So, it wasn’t even something that I had to write from scratch. Just had to fill in my name, job title, and the length of time. I guess the university knows what they’re looking for. They do this stuff all the time. But in terms of permanence, yeah I do really want to be here. We don’t want to go home. My daughter, the middle daughter – she’s 12, she’s been hearing that we’ve got a 4-year visa. She says, you know in 4 years I’m gonna be 16, im gonna be an adult, I can stay back by myself. So, if you go home to Scotland, you’ll be leaving me behind. Laughs. But yeah, I would like to see us translate that into a permanent visa. We think after the 3rd year, the university can sponsor me for PR. I did ask that in my interview, if I could go straight on to PR as opposed to TSS, and they said no. That would’ve been easier for me. I guess the added incentive was that the university was gonna pay for the relocation.

M: Mapping

L: So, I think. So, the visa category was a working holiday visa, It was 2001. I don’t remember what the number was and I think that I. I came out in September, no I came out in May. So, I definitely know that I flew home on the day of the Sept 11th. So, I woke up and saw the twin towers fall, and thought to myself that I had to fly on a plane all the way to Scotland. I had 3 flights to get that day, and I remember, I woke up – and I was at my aunties in Brisbane coz she was gonna drive me to the airport to get my flight to Sydney. And I remember, just waking up, having breakfast and we’d put on the news, and just watching it happen, thinking, oh my goodness. I was phoning my mum and saying I can’t possibly be flying today, what am I gonna do. But actually, it was fine. It was a really interesting flight. Everybody was kinda shell shocked and there was no luggage, like, some planes were not running. I remember I had to wait for hours in London for a final connection. So, yeah it must’ve been 2000, and 2001 when I came home. Yeah, crazy. You just never forget. So I didn’t plan to come to Australia on that working holiday visa actually. It was between my 2nd and 3rd year at college. I wanted to go to Japan. My cousin was working in Japan at the time, and I was studying textile design, and I remember saying to one of my teachers oh my cousin’s in japan. I’d really like to go and get some textile-based experience in Japan, take the summer break. We have an extended summer break in Scotland – so it’s like May to September. She said to me I think you don’t have enough knowledge or expertise yet to do any kind of work in that field, and I was gutted. So, I never went to Japan and that’s when I thought I’m gonna actually take some time off and go to Australia. So, WHV – I don’t remember how long it took but I don’t think it took long. I just remember you had to have a 1000 pounds in your bank on a statement to show for the. So that was 2001. Okay, so then we came back in Christmas 2011-2012. We came out for 4 weeks, just a tourist visa. We went to WA. So, we went up and down the coast of Western Australia. So yeah, and then I saw the job advert, and then I was invited out. So, when I came out, when I was invited out, they said, it was in the end of November, they said, well can you come out in the next 2 weeks, which was great – it fit in my schedule but I had applied online for a visa to come out, and it hadn’t come through. They booked my flights, they paid for all my flights to come out and had applied online – it was just a tourist visa, online on the government website, and it wasn’t coming, and it wasn’t coming, and it said it will just take 40 hours to 5 days, and the clock was ticking, the clock was ticking. The day before I flew, I phoned Australia to the government thing to say, I got up in the middle of the night to phone them and say, Im meant to be coming out, I’ve paid for my flights, I don’t have the visa yet, and he said yeah theres a backlog, theres nothing we can do, you shouldn’t have booked your flights until you had your visa, and I was like Oh God, whats happening, and I happened to have mentioned it to someone else. So, nobody knew I was coming out this week. I hadn’t told any of my friends or family because I wasn’t gonna say that Im going for a job interview in case I never got it. But I had told my mum and she had spoken to somebody at work who said she can get a tourist visa from the estate agent, no travel agent. So, you can get a tourist visa, you can pay 20 pounds at the travel agent in the UK anyway. Not sure about anywhere else and I’m not sure about what it’s called. So, the morning of the day that I flew, I went to the travel agent at 9 o clock, asked them to open the door and they gave me a visa for 20 pounds in about 20 minutes. And that overrides the visa. So about 3 days into my stay here, I got an email from the government site here to say that your visa application has been cancelled. I’m thinking, what’s wrong and then I realised that it was the one that I had done online. So, you can’t get visa on arrival for Australia for me, on a UK passport. They wouldn’t let me on a flight if I didn’t have a visa. So, that was my problem. My flight was gonna take 36 hours. So, I had asked what if my government one comes through by the time I arrive? Would that be okay? And he said, well you’re not allowed to leave Scotland unless you’ve got a visa in place. And it is exactly the same visa that the government would give you but it is a different name. Its just a tourist visa. They just click a few buttons and they give you this and it lasts for 3 months, which I think is the same as the government one. But its not in the government system. Although, it must actually go through the govt system because the govt system emailed me to say we realise you’re already in Australia so we’re gonna cancel this application. So, that was a bit of stress because the morning I was flying, I was like I don’t have a visa to get in. So, I arrived, then went home again, took the job, and then the visa’s came in 6th of January 19, and we booked our flights for 25th of Feb. I was scared to book the flights until the visas weren’t there. So it wasn’t the job I applied for but I knew as soon as I came for the visit that I was gonna do the job. Absolutely. And I said that to them. Although afterwards, the dean of the school, the boss, said I didn’t think youd actually were gonna do the job. I was like really! Why!. She was like, I knew you were adventurous, but I just thought it would be too big a move for the entire family. I said well.. I always found it interesting that people interview for jobs and have no intention of taking the job. I was always gonna take the job if I was interviewing for the job, if I got offered it.

M: Commercial services

L: Okay so for visa prep, we had to have. So, that was a bit of a pest because they asked for all of this information over the Christmas break where everybody is shut, and everything’s closed. But we had to get two police checks. So my husband had to go get that. We had to pay for that. It was like $160 each. We had to have pay slips – 3 X payslips from both of us plus the annual tax review. We had to have the whole family’s birth certificates. I couldn’t find mine either. I found the abbreviated version but not my full one, and our marriage certificate. It was quite confusing because the university have an HR relocations person and I was issued with a contact person, and she was like my constant throughout. So, she provided me with all the information, kind of step-by-step, screen-shots of what you need to do, and usually its quite straight forward but some of the questions were, So she said – they recommended use a visa agent to do your visa application. I didn’t. They gave me list. So, they provided a list of people and companies who could do it for your visa, for schools, for accommodation. So, they provided that. I decided not to use an agent for the visa because I thought it was gonna be easy, and it was generally easy. The question that tricked me was the IELTS because I’m a national English speaker. Do I have to do IELTS? And I had to come back and ask that and she said no no, the university ticks that all for you. So, everything else was pretty straight forward. So, it’s a 2-part visa because its sponsored. So, the university had to submit all their paperwork to say that this this the post, and this is a post we can’t fill with anyone locally, the labour market testing, and then once they had their approved, they send it on to me to submit all my paperwork and the fee, and I think the fees, altogether was like $7000 for the family. The kids were quite cheap. That’s when you think we really should’ve used an agent because if that’s wrong then they can say were gonna keep that money. But luckily, it was all right. We didn’t need any medical checks. So, that surprised me because I had to have a medical check for my temporary working holiday visa. I was very surprised. What my visa does require is that I have private health insurance and I don’t know whether they think that if you have private medical insurance then you’re not gonna be a burden because you’re gonna pay for yourself but I had to tick … there were a few checkboxes that I had to tick to say that I was in good health. I’m not a bad person. But it was all self-check. I had to have... I had to supply 2 names and addresses for character witnesses to provide a character statement. I don’t know whether they were requested though. So, it was contact details for somebody to provide a character reference and I provided – one of my really good friends for the village is also a policeman. So, he certified all of my documents and he also provided a character reference – his email address and his address. I don’t think he had to sign anything to say it, but he had to agree in person. I don’t know whether they actually did that. I had to provide the letter of skills from my employer based on a template. Yea so, when the visas came back in January, they said well this is your visa paperwork and of course, it’s all just digital. So, it was just like a think you print out. But as a condition of your visa, you must have your health insurance. I’m like, yeah, that’s fine, I’ll do it. But, by the time I got around to doing it, it was like 3 days before we were leaving and I was like.. what if they ask me at the airport, have you got your health insurance and if I say ‘Not yet’, then they might not let me in through the border. Okay – so try to do it online. And there are a number of – the university game me a list of insurance people who would do the health insurance for me so I went through them – basically just trying to find the cheapest one coz UK health have a reciprocal agreement with Medicare so that still covers you for the basics and… like I finished work on the Friday, flew in the Saturday – this is the Wednesday, I thought I’d get this organised. Just between selling everything and saying goodbye to people, it just slipped my mind. So, it wasn’t through. I had submitted all the applications and done all the paperwork but didn’t receive a confirmation yet. So, I had visions of us being stopped at the airport. But actually, nobody said anything. In about a week that I was here, I actually phoned up the company that I had submitted my applications to to see – am I insured, whats happened and he said oh yeah we just need a bit more information and then we’ll back date it to the date you arrived. So, that was quite straight forward. I actually don’t know, I think I’m with NIB, but I don’t know what I’m insured for. Never used it. We’ve had three visits to the doctors for my kids since we’ve been here but just used Medicare. Nobody even asked for this. But it’s a condition of our visa. The condition of our visa is always have health insurance and I don’t take any work apart from this job but Alans open to work wherever he wants to work. My husband was worried about his police checks because he was arrested as a teenager for being drunk and disorderly. But, he’s like, he’s 46. So that’s a really long time ago but he was really anxious about it. But that was all fine. I don’t think there was anything that took long to come through or that was difficult to get. I guess in this whole process, we were realising how much money it was gonna cost and thinking is it worth it? Coz we had to pay the visa fees and we also – we have to education fees here. So, each of the kids, we have to pay the government fee of $5200 per child per year to go to school. So, that was gonna be extra. Its meant to be lump sum but we argued that I’ve got 3 kids. I cant afford that and all this. So, we’re paying in 2 blocks. It is still a lot of money. It wasn’t until a couple of weeks ago.. somebody said that, that’s actually a lot similar to some of the private school fees for primary, and you could’ve thought to put your younger one in private school. But actually, they’re settled in this school. Its interested because the schools don’t get that money. The schools get about, I think they said, about a hundred dollars extra but the government get that money. So, what am I paying that money for? Do you know what I mean – like if its not going to schools for providing education for my child. That was another reason I wanted PR at the start because then I don’t have to pay the school fees.

M: Technology

L: All the visa prep was all online. All submission of documents, even the police check, everything – it was all online which was simple, easy. I guess from, probably when I was invited out was when I started doing some actual online research thinking hmm this might actually happen. So, I… it was really difficult finding information about family migration and stories of family migration. I found one blog and I kept coming back to her information (I cant remember the name) – and it was things like thinking about schools, thinking about suburbs to live in, and she was just one person who actually migrated herself I think and its quite out of date. But everything I searched for, I just came back to her. So, it was this one woman blog. It was quite outdated but she had guest submissions to her blog. I guess she had guest submissions about visas and stuff. Why it was so difficult – there was lots of information about 457 but because 482 was so new, it was difficult. There was very little in terms of peoples experiences around it. That was difficult. I don’t Facebook, I don’t use FB. I have FB to have access to my kids dancing classes because that’s where they post that information, but I don’t use it as a networking thing. So, there was nothing on there that I looked at. But this suburb site – its like a suburb rating site – I used that a lot. And the problem with these kind of sites is that they’re like review sites but people only post negative reviews generally because there’s no incentive for you to post something positive. But, they were a good indicator of what a suburb was like I felt and so we did use that a lot for reviews and Domain and Real estate. I was really just wanting to find a resource that was about family migration but its fluid. There’s not such a thing as a resource. Who’s gonna keep it up to date? I’m sure there were those things where I clicked at something and there was a response in a forum but I never engaged in a forum. There are – although now – our house that we rented for a year, the owner, the house owner, out it up for sale about a month ago. I was like oh no were gonna have to move again, what are we gonna do. There were a couple of open houses and then it got sold. It got sold in the 2nd viewing, and the people who bought it are gonna continue having it as a rental so we can continue to stay there. So, we were like phew. But I did join the Sutherland shire community facebook page because I was looking for other houses in that area. There’s a buy and sell and swap page, but for me, I was hoping to find other accommodation on that site. Although I didn’t need to use it but that’s what I imagined I would use it for.

M: Social Connections

L: So def my cousin Stuart who was based here for most of the time. He was quite important. I guess he was important for providing that safe post box but also to know there was somebody here if something was to go crazy and also when I knew, so it wasn’t gonna be the job I applied for but there was gonna be a job, I needed to know that the money they were offering me was money that I could live on coz I actually had no idea. In the greater scheme of things – how much does it cost to live in Sydney, was I gonna be able to live on that wage. So, this is someone I could ask those questions to.. this is what theyre offering me. Is it worth it? Would I manage to live on that? And of course he said yes. So, he was like a sounding board. Martin here, who is my line manager. He is from Austria originally. So he’s a migrant too and he shared about his experience, and hes been here a long time now. It was helpful coz hes got kids too and he talked about what that was like. His kids are kinda similar ages as well. Lots of people at home in Scotland were really nice. So, when the community, they heard that we were moving they were like ‘Oh we’ve got family here, or we know this person’. So we got lots of addresses and phone numbers. We never followed up on any of them. But, I guess they’re all kinda there. We just haven’t had time. It was so fast. So, people were always happy to provide, you know like somebody, in this context that could help if you needed them. And, Amika, whos the HR relocation person – she was great because I sent her lots of emails to say…what about this, what about this, how long till I get my money back. I don’t know if there was anybody else. I did it all. Alan just got on the plane with the kids. He didn’t really do any of this. And then I guess we had the people at the stage that we sold our house. Actually, we put it up for sale when we were still there, but it sold after we left. So, my mum and dad were power of attorney to sign off on that.

M: Husband?

L: So, when we arrived the kids… So in Scotland, the schools run from August to July. That’s the school year. But here the School year runs January to December. So, we moved in Feb.. they had already done 6 months of school – in the school here. So, when we got here, they had to go back 6 months which meant that they didn’t have to go to school straight away. They had about 6 weeks to get settled in before they went to school. So, Alan didn’t work that time, and it was good for me because it meant I could focus on getting to work, finding my feet, not having to worry about childcare and that kind of this. So, that was the first 6 weeks. Then we moved into our house in Sutherland shire so that was a couple of weeks before school and then there was Easter holidays. So, he said he’d probably go to work after Easter holidays. They went back to school after Easter holidays and he started looking for things, for jobs, but there was nothing really. I don’t that he was actively looking, and then there was summer holidays. My daughter got sick in between so she missed about 2 weeks of school in that term so he was off for that, which was okay. And then there was the summer holidays. So, it was like, okay, after the summer holidays, and after the summer holidays I had to go to Malaysia. So it was like, okay after I come back from Malaysia. So now the kids are back into school and hes gonna have to start looking for something. But hes gonna look for something part-time so he can work around the kids. He fancies a career change but he doesn’t know what and he isn’t the kinda, you know, hes in a new place, perfect place to have a career change. But the longer hes gonna think about it, the harder it is going to be for him to get a job. You know, the confidence, and so on. But he needs to build a network, so I feel he needs to get a job, and I’ve been trying to do that in a diplomatic way. Laughs. But, it’s just not happening. So, he is, he doesn’t really do online coz internet was after he left school and all that. But he does do Gumtree coz that’s where he was looking at cars, on Gumtree, coz we don’t have a car yet. So, that’s what hes focusing on at the moment. But, he does the school run in the morning. So, he sees all the parents and stuff but the area that we live in, its more of a – its not really a city – its more of a suburb. So a lot of the mums don’t work.. theres a lot of stay at home mums.. so its mostkly mums at school who actually don’t really speak to him. But he has made… so we have 2 sets to neighbours that we have become good friends with and he has 2 other neighbours – one is 70 and one is 80 – and they keep knocking on our door to ask him to come and do little jobs, like lift things, or fix this, or fix that. Every time he does that, they try to pay him and hes like no I’m not taking money for this. So he comes home with these things.. he came home with a golf set.. he came home with a mixer… theyre just giving him stuff. So, hes been meeting people but he doesn’t have a network of people who are the same age, and I think that’s what he would need for him to get into work. And I think, its difficult coz our roles have completely been reversed as well. So, he was the main breadwinner and now hes not working at all, and I’ve got a network here and he doesn’t have that. So, its difficult for him. I don’t doubt that its difficult for him, and that makes him homesick. And because he was away working offshore a lot of the time, so he didn’t have the time with the kids. So, its nice for him to have that. But he has to adjust to what that feels like because it isn’t all roses like he imagines it. The kids are grumpy in the morning and he gets annoyed about making lunches, and da da da.. so I think, its just gonna take some time.

M: Regulatory

L: It was a bit of … it wasn’t really for the visa but it was a bit of a hassle trying to get my tax file number sorted out because I had one in 2001 for the WHV, and I wasn’t sure if I needed to get a new one or I could just reactive it, and they said I could just reactivate it and then there was a problem with the reactivation.

M: Immigration polices?

L: When we were thinking about coming in 2011, I read a lot about different visa options and how we could go about it, what that would be like, what the requirements were. Think time around, it just happened so quickly, I just went with the flow. Usually I’m really, I do a lot of research. I’m a researcher, that’s what I do. But this time, it was almost like it happened. I didn’t expect it to be so easy and I did not expect the visa to come through so quickly and I think its because of the university in part because it’s a huge institution and they do this regularly. One of the big concerns I had coming was disrupting the kids, you know they had friends, and their lifestyle. So, I was really wanted to make sure that.. So, my daughter dances and my son does jujitsu. So, I wanted to find somewhere that they could get back into this stuff straight away. So that had a lot to do choosing the location as well. And I did use that Sutherland shire FB page to see what dances available, what jujitsu places. So, I guess that helped get recommendations because theres 100’s of dance schools. Whats a good dance school. So I did use that. There was, one of the first weeks, in our house. There was a local newspaper that came through, and it was volunteer week, and there was a call out for volunteers to go visit older people, elderly people. So we had a chat at home and we thought well lets sign up for that because the kids don’t have their grannies anymore… just that intergenerational connection. But we never got around to that. That’s on my list to do because I think that they’re missing that and if they can give that to somebody who doesn’t have that, that would be a good thing. But, its just time.

M: Do you give migration advice?

L: Im trying to recruit one of my former colleagues to come do a PhD here and I keep telling her how easy it is to come. Shes not convinced. But I guess Im just trying to share that knowledge. But in terms of challenges, I guess its just that things online – particularly for academic migration – were framed around the single academic, and not with their family because threes a lot of movement within academic staff but not always with kids and a husband. And even, the information from the immigration adviser was framed around, okay what does it mean for me to come as a single person, but I was like, I’m also coming with 3 kids. What does that mean for US? So, that’s the main one. But then nobody’s got exactly the same story. So, I don’t know what I was looking for. Its constant movements with academics and actually now that Im here, there’s lots of international staff here, and there was lots of international staff in my previous job as well but you just kind of take it for granted when you’re home. You don’t really think that they’re going through all this visa stuff in the background. But academia is international. I do quite a lot of travelling with work anyway. Not so much here, greanted. But last 2 years have been 5 or 6 destinations a year. So, I’m quite happy to navigate that system. I guess maybe for Alan who doesn’t do that much travelling, hes anxious he doesn’t have a physical visa in his passport. So, when I did my first move we both had the WHV stuck in our passport – like something like China do now. But now everything’s online, so he feels anxious coz he doesn’t have something to say that he’s entitled to be here. He’s looking for that physical stamp that says he can be here, especially at airports. It doesn’t bother me much but I know that it causes him some anxiety.

M: What about family moving here?

L: Im certainly dropping hints to my family for them to move here but theyre still working. So, what they’ll do is that they’ll retire and then spend 3 months here and 3 months in Canada, not in Africa because where my sister lives is not safe. My sister is coming out at Christmas. It’s a surprise for the kids. I’m gonna wrap her in a box at the front door… if I can keep that a secret. What I would like is for her to migrate. She would do great. Shes 10 years younger than me. She loves her job, very career oriented, not married, no kids and I think she would do really well here. I don’t know. I would like her to come out here. Shes never been.

M: Migration elsewhere?

L: I definitely am much more open to that and I would go anywhere. I think it would depend on what the role is and my offer. I guess, Alan would like to go to NZ. He spent a year working there and he would like to move there. He sees himself live there. I guess Canada is an option. My brothers there and he loves it – absolutely loves it. But even back to Europe, maybe Switzerland or Denmark, something like that. Although, Im quite open to that but ceaser has got his exams next year and that’s gonna limit where we take him. We have to think about what will happen to his education, and then we have to think about university. In Scotland university is free if you’re a Scottish resident. You don’t pay any fees. But you’ve got to be living in Scotland for 3 years before you apply for university. So, if we stay here for 4 years, he will be the age to go to university, and if we go home to Scotland, we would have to pay for his education. He won’t get that free coz he would’ve been out of the country. I think we’re imagining that we’re not gonna go back but that will be something we think about if we were to move somewhere else.

M: Future plans?

L: I think def the plan is for PR, ideally and maybe buy a house. I don’t know. We sold our house and at the moment that money is sitting in the back, risking being spent on other things. But, its just so expensive here that we don’t know if we will buy a house or we’ll just rent, or will we move elsewhere in Australia. Again, that will be dictated by my post, my job, whether it will be a promotion or just a similar role in another area. Definitely be open to looking at, although I love it here, but potentially somewhere norther, where its cheaper for houses. Because we come over with just suitcases, we spent the first 3 months just buying furniture, looking for furniture, or like cutlery… all of the things you don’t really miss until you’ve got to use them. So, I’ve just got a dining table to get and a car – those are the two things. We’re actually looking for a van so we can go away and things, you know, we can put bikes at the back or the surfboards at the back. One thing I do love about Sydney is the public transport. It’s just so easy and so cheap. It’s just so so cheap compared to Scotland. So cheap. Im in the highlands of Scotland where the infrastructure is really poor, the buses run, like, every hour and the train network doesn’t reach anywhere you need to go. So, I’m loving the public transport. So, we go to the beach. Most Sundays were at the beach. Saturdays, the kids have clubs – dancing and all those things. But once we have a van, the idea is that we’ll go on a Friday night and come back on Sunday. Once we had decided to come, I was thinking Oh God, theres gonna be no house that we can afford. Everythings gonna be super expensive. The housing is super expensive. But in terms of food, like its pretty much the same that we pay in Scotland. For paying the bills, electricity and gas is cheaper than what we were paying in Scotland. So, I guess we are.. actually, we’re on one wage but probably living the same quality of life that we were in Scotland which is good. Just 70% of my wages in going on accommodation which is crazy. Super crazy. Everything else is alright. That’s another reason why Alan needs to start working. Im really conscious... I don’t want to start chipping away our house money coz oce we start, its gonna be gone. You know what – you’ve just left me with a question of whether my friend was asked for a character reference or not.

M: Mapping?

L: Yes. So, I love it. This is exactly what I did in my PhD interviews as well. I did mapping. For me, selfishly what attracted me to do this research is that everything’s been so much of a blur, its just been so quick. I haven’t had time to sit back and think what did it mean, what did I have to do. So, this has given me the space to do that. Actually, its quite amazing I managed to do all of that in that length of time.