

An Expat Life



When did you go to Toronto and why?

I moved from Sydney in December 2014. There were new and exciting things happening in Toronto on the topics that were important to me. I wanted to take on some challenges in terms of education and building big telescopes.

What's the key to adapting to a new city?

Understanding what the locals do for fun – getting into their hobbies, their weekend getaways, their sports, their politics, their food and their music.

What do you miss about Australia?

We don't take ourselves seriously. It seems that in every other country there's this sense of formality, a sense of propriety, and in Australia that doesn't exist. People call a spade a spade.

You're a rugby league fan. What's your team?

I'm a Manly Sea Eagles season ticket holder. I miss my footy a great deal; I watch it over the internet. It's pretty clear that when I'm not in the country they don't play as well. I miss my cricket, too.

Bryan Gaensler

He's a self-described rugby league tragic and political junkie. So how's the director of the Dunlap Institute for Astronomy & Astrophysics at the University of Toronto dealing with life in Canada?

INTERVIEW BY **DI WEBSTER**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JASON GORDON**

How has life changed since moving?

In any career, when you've been doing the same thing for 10 years or so, you get stuck in a bit of a rut. In Toronto I've been forced to rethink all of the things I thought I knew how to do, professionally and personally.

What do you like most about living there?

Australia is a very sensible, caring, functional society but sometimes people think that everything is too hard and it's easier to sit back and enjoy life. The US is a place where things get done but it's a very cutthroat, fierce, intense environment. Canada is the best of both worlds.

What aspects of Toronto would you like to bring back to Australia?

In Australia, we talk about multiculturalism and diversity but Canada is a lot closer to living it. In Canada, no-one cares where you come from or what language you speak; they celebrate the fact that everyone is different in a way that's a little bit more mature than we do it in Australia.

What aspect of Australian life do you wish you had in Toronto?

The one drawback about Canada – no surprises – is the weather. The winter is very tough.

When you think of home, where is that?

Sydney. Every time I see the Harbour Bridge or the Opera House on TV – I'm not a very sentimental person but even now I get a funny, peculiar feeling in my stomach.

Where would we find you outside of work?

Learning to ice-skate.

How's that going for you?

Not so well. Some good advice I got was to wear multiple tracksuit pants because you're going to get a wet bum.

Do you have a favourite Toronto restaurant?

My son and I went to The Peartree in Cabbagetown (507 Parliament Street). It's a family-run neighbourhood restaurant that you feel helps build the community. And the food is delicious.

What about a bar?

There's a pub down the road from the office called Prenup Pub (191 College Street) with a good menu and a range of beers and ciders on tap.

What's the first thing you're going to do when you're back in Australia?

Probably have a can of Solo and some chicken and chips.

From where does the universe look its finest?

The universe looks its finest from Uluru. I thought I'd been to a lot of places with dark skies but I really hadn't seen the night sky properly until I saw it on a dark, clear night next to the rock. ●