



AT HOME

An innovator finds peace in her bush haven

SUE WALLACE

Stretching in a yoga pose while watching sunlight creep through a blue-tinted eucalypt forest from a secluded country retreat brings great joy to Penny Locaso.

The dynamic entrepreneur and educator, known as the world's first Happiness Hacker, says it's that "me-time" that's so important in life.

"It's a perfect start to the day and if I had one wish, it's that others gift themselves permission to create the space once or twice a week for themselves. I am a firm believer in giving yourself the time to just be," she says.

Home for Ms Locaso and son Saxon, 10, is a property close to the small Victorian town of Ballingaroo, near Gisborne, a one-hour drive from Melbourne.

"As soon as I walked in, I felt everything was aligned — it is such a beautiful place here with great views to the nearby Wombat State Forest," she says.

The popular TEDx speaker says she's been in "monk mode" for months completing her new book *Hacking Happiness*, with a television series also planned.



Ms Locaso describes the five-bedroom house, set on 10ha, as an ideal retreat where she practises her mantra of hacking happiness in "a world where we've never been more technologically connected yet humanly disconnected".

Her favourite place is the living room where she lights the open

fire at 5am daily then rolls out her yoga mat. She loves views of the rolling hills and often spots kangaroos and wombats out exploring.

A quirky tin cocktail on a chain swings from the archedway near the TV room and makes her smile every time she passes.

The open-plan kitchen is the hub of the house and Ms Locaso



Penny Locaso in a yoga pose with Tilly and Max at her country retreat near Gisborne. AARON FRANCIS



loves to cook using the bounty from the thriving vegetable garden and busy chickens.

"I cook a mean pizza — I start from scratch and make the base and we enjoy a traditional roast on Sunday," she says.

A country girl at heart, she grew up on a farm at Pakenham in Melbourne's outskirts, where her



mother bred cattle and thoroughbred horses.

"I know how lucky I am to live here especially during COVID and my day is structured with work, home schooling, meditation, bushwalks and exercise," she says.

Ms Locaso shares the property with six sheep, four cows, eight

chooks, an alpaca, Waldo the wombat, and two dogs — Tilly, a black labrador, and Max, a labradoodle.

She says country life is never dull — the local SES unit recently rescued Tilly, after she chased a wombat 10 metres underground.

In 2014 she turned her life upside down in pursuit of happiness — within seven months she left a 16-year career at Shell, relocated her family from Perth back to Melbourne, and started her own company — hackinghappy.co.

"My mission is to teach 10 million humans how to intentionally adapt by 2025 in order to future-proof happiness," says Ms Locaso. She now works with individuals and organisations around the world helping them define happiness on their terms and building the confidence to experiment to bring more of it into the everyday.

A faculty member of the esteemed Singularity University at NASA Research Centre Silicon Valley, Ms Locaso works alongside some of the world's best artificial intelligence and technology leaders teaching the practice of happiness.

"Happiness for me isn't about skipping down the street painting rainbows, it's about being able to ride the wave of every emotion that life throws at you, knowing you have the skills, resources and support to come out the other side just a little better than what you were before," she says.



LISA ALLEN

Pay-off for Point Piper

Former Sydney lord mayor Nelson Meers and wife Carole have reaped \$18m from the sale of their whole-floor harbour-side apartment, which previously has commanded a hefty rental of \$3,250 a week. Meers, who also owns a couple of suburban Sydney pubs, bought the four-bedder at 476 Buckhurst Avenue, Point Piper, for \$16m in January 2017, public records reveal. Selling agents Bill Malouf and Margaret Morosi of LJ Hooker Double Bay were tight-lipped about the sale this time. But it is understood the apartment attracted a fair bit of local eastern suburbs interest. The buyer is downsizing from elsewhere in the area. It is understood the Meers have bought elsewhere. They purchased the Buckhurst Avenue unit from John Roth and his wife Jillian Segal, who paid \$11.6m for it in 2011.

A spring affair

Just in time for spring, a lavish Far North Queensland spread has again hit the market. Vendors commercial pilot David Probert and his wife Sharon, have relisted 9 Coloned Cummings Drive, Palm Cove, with a price guide of \$18m. The four-bedroom estate on 501sq m was built in 2002 and is being marketed by McGrath Twoed Heads agents Jason Monk and Ray White Port Douglas's Mark Flinn. The peak exterior was imported from Myanmar and the property, just north of Cairns, is sure to appeal to those seeking to escape COVID-19.

Lofty ambitions



198-200 Australia Street, Newtown

In a record for the inner-Sydney suburb of Newtown, a factory conversion has sold for \$5.8m. The 198-200 Australia Street warehouse conversion on 509sq m will be redevelped following the sale, which the suburb record by \$750,000. The Agency's Brad