



Scozzies: Jamie, 9 and Mackinley, 11

"You're a Scozzie". I turned to my young son and told him not to call his sister names. "No, mum we're all Scozzie's" he exclaimed.

Scottish Aussies was a new one to me. When I first came to Melbourne 22 years ago for 12 months I had never heard the word and all these years later I am still learning the Australian vernacular. Most people have probably by now heard such lovelies as "flat out like a lizard drinking" for when one is particularly busy, or "charges like a wounded bull" for when something is very expensive. One of my favourites is "having a domestic" when all is not rosy on the home front. During my first month here and first exposure to the manically supported Australian Rules football game, someone told me they had been to a match and had sat next to a "blind, one-eyed Carlton barracker". I had thought, how loyal for a supporter presumably from the army barracks', to still go to the game when he wasn't even able to watch was happening. It took weeks for me to realise that this supporter was in no way handicapped but rather when translated from the Aussie slang was in fact, "a drunk Carlton fan with tunnel vision".

I grew up in Scotland learning Spanish and French and can now say I speak quite passable Australian. I had never intended originally to settle here but the love of the place kind of creeps up on you and after two years most people find it extremely hard to leave.

I joined Shell Outpost Melbourne at its inception in the mid 90's and remained the focal point for ten years. It's safe to say I think that a lot of the people I came across in that time, once they had lived here for over two years, were terribly loathe to leave and indeed many did opt to stay. It happened to my Glaswegian husband whom I met whilst I was living in California in the early 90's, he worked for Shell and we both came to Melbourne on an expat posting. I had already lived here previously for four years and adored the place but he came pretty reticently and was no way going to stay more than two. That was fifteen years ago, so now he is also a Scozzie.

As wonderful as it is to live here however I do miss Europe and all it offers. We did an extensive renovation on our house in Melbourne three years ago and had the option of moving out and renting a place locally, or heading to Europe and renting there. This was June, winter in the southern hemisphere and although I'm the first to say that winters are positively tropical here compared to Edinburgh where I come from, they are not a patch on the south of France in high summer.

We spent two blissful months in Provence in a charming villa overlooking the Cote du Rhone perched on the hillside of a 12th century village. I have previously lived in France and travelled there quite extensively but have never before come

across the 'hidden France' such as we found there. And so a plan was hatched. Whenever I have asked my children what they want to do when they grow up, they have asked the question right back. My response has always been, "I want to take boutique gourmet food, cooking and wine tours to France and Spain."

The time we spent that summer in Provence was a turning point for me. It allowed me to dive head first into the area and get to know the local delights, the passionate purveyors, the beautiful countryside, the wonderful markets and all the hidden gems off the beaten track. It also led to bundling all this wonderful knowledge together and starting my own business called Picnics in Provence (www.picnicsinprovence.com). It truly delights me twice a year to be able to take small groups, usually not more than eight people back to this fabulous area for a week or more and show them just how special it is. The tours take in beautiful parts of the French Riviera and northern Provence and the guests take in incredibly delectable food and marvellous wines.

It's often assumed from other mums at my kids primary school in Melbourne that I must appoint someone else to take the tours due to them being in France but I quickly point out; that's the whole point - that I get to go too!

I'm terribly lucky as my husband works from home so is able to be here for the kids and keep the home fires burning when I go. He was employed and then contracted to Shell for many years and now works for himself from home, as do I. Thankfully since we renovated the house we have enough room not to have to share an office; we've been there, done that and barely survived!

Picnics in Provence is my passion but I have another business renting out beach houses

around the southeastern coast of Australia and managing short-term executive accommodation in Melbourne. Life therefore is a wee bit busier than I would have ever envisaged but in the current climate I am incredibly grateful that there aren't ever enough hours in the day.

The balance is indeed tricky. My eleven-year-old daughter was looking for me the other day whilst I was in the corner of the room quietly nestled in a deep chair. Bliss. I watched her as she walked into my office, then the kitchen, and then the laundry. When she finally spied me she exclaimed, "What on earth are you doing? You are always either in the kitchen, in the laundry or working!" I'm not quite sure what kind of example I may be setting for my children, as for this Scozzie it's all a bit of a juggling act. One however I wouldn't change for the world.



The Pollock Family

EVERY CHILD IS DIFFERENT



BERNARDO GARCIA

Venezuelan family the Garcia's moved to Assen, the Netherlands in 2006. This is their first expat posting. They share their experiences of moving to a different country with a child with Special Educational Needs.

It is natural for children to develop at different speeds and in different ways was what we thought when our son Mauricio was almost three and his language wasn't developing, as it should. Although his vocabulary was limited, he was learning letters, numbers and colours very quickly and was also showing an amazing capacity to understand how things worked (toys, DVD players).

It was the end of 2005 and my wife Maria was working for Shell and I was working for Exxon Mobil in Venezuela. In January 2006 an attractive opportunity arose when Maria was offered a

job in the Netherlands working on a challenging project on a five-year contract. Working abroad was something we had always considered earlier in our careers and it seemed the time had come to give it a try. Besides, finding a job for me in the Netherlands seemed possible.

As Maria was working on completing the official handshake, our concerns with Mauricio were growing. There was still little progress in his language and on top of that, we began observing some unusual new behaviour, so we decided to look for professional advice. After running a couple of tests and undergoing some observation sessions, a child psychologist diagnosed him with a very mild case of PDD-NOS (Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified), a condition within the autistic spectrum. I have to admit the word 'autistic' was absolutely shocking. It felt like someone hammering in my head. We used to think it was nothing but a normal language delay he would overcome with a bit of speech therapy. However, this was something harder to understand and difficult to accept, and it changed our lives in a very unexpected way.

A lot of questions went through our minds and the excitement and stress of the first posting was also mixed with sorrow. After much discussion and lots of encouragement from our family and friends, we decided to move and start our new life in the Netherlands. Maria would start a new job and I would be a full-time dad / therapist for Mauricio for a while, so we packed our bags and moved to Assen, a nice small city in northeast.

As with many postings, the first few months were quite stressful for all of us. We had to deal with a lot of changes and I was also facing the fact that, for the first time in many years, I had no 'formal' job. It didn't take me very long to realise how hard it is to run a household (my respect and admiration goes out to every housewife)!

As planned, Mauricio was enrolled in The Helen Sharman British School where he started his formal education with a limited Spanish vocabulary, a few English words and (to be honest) not the highest expectations from Mum and Dad. I should say that we felt relieved when the school staff showed genuine interest in us, and total commitment to giving Mauricio all the extra support he needed.

Having this kind of help from the school and living in a small town like Assen made life so much easier for the three of us and after some months of natural adjustment and good home/school teamwork, Mauricio started picking up the new language and showing important progress in other areas.

After a few months, the special needs coordinator suggested looking for further advice from the local child psychology institute, but even while we were looking for all the support available, I have to admit we were a bit sceptical about it all. Firstly, we were talking about a Dutch institute, with Dutch therapists who were supposed to run initial tests in Dutch. Besides, finding a place in the





Mauricio and Maria visit the Rijksmuseum

institute involved dealing with Dutch bureaucracy at its best. It wasn't just filling in loads of forms in perfect Dutch, but sorting our way through it all.

Months later we finally made it on the waiting list, which added another four months to the process until I finally received a call for the first appointment. It was a secretary whose English was as good as my Dutch.

Again, not the highest expectations from us, but an unexpected twist changed things for the better. An English doctor with extensive experience in special needs children and parental counseling who worked and lived in the Netherlands heard about us and decided to take the case. From the beginning her approach made sense to us. Instead of running the usual tests and planning one-to-one sessions with Mauricio in a different language she simply helped us understand what PDD is and gave us the tools to work with him at home.

It's been over two years and thanks to the dedication and commitment of both the school

staff and the specialist, Mauricio's language and social skills have improved a lot and his reading, writing and maths are progressing with every term. He has made some good friends at school and is also doing very well in his swimming lessons. I also have to say we find the Dutch are unusually open, flexible, encouraging and respectful to handicapped people.

As for me, I have found a part-time job, which gives me some time to work with him at home. Regarding his future, it is hard to say if his progress will remain constant or what the future holds, but nowadays we truly feel this is the best place for us to be at this stage in our lives.

We're writing this because we'd like to share our experience and also because we would like to have the chance to express our gratitude, once again, to everyone at the Helen Sharman School and Accare, especially to Joanna, Sue, Teresa and the Navarros. God bless.

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER





DR ZELIA ARAUJO-MUGGLI

Norway with latitudes between 58°N and 71.1°N is home to The Winter Depression 58-70°N research group. Based in the University of Tromsø (69.4°N, where the sun does not set from mid May to late July and does not rise from mid November to late January), they study the impact of natural daylight variations on behaviour and biology; namely on Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). But what is this disorder and how can it be treated?

What is it SAD?

Many of us have experienced a winter-related low mood: the 'winter blues'. Although clear mechanisms are not yet established, most scientists now believe that seasons can affect our moods as a result of how the body responds to daylight.

The main difference between winter blues and seasonal affective disorder is that people with SAD have a much more serious intensity of the symptoms of depression, severely impairing their daily lives and requiring treatment. They have normal or high mood throughout most of the year, but experience depressive symptoms usually beginning in late autumn or early winter and dissipating by spring. A much less common type of SAD, known as summer-onset depression, usually begins in the late spring or early summer and goes away by winter.