An Expat Life

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?

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?
Canada is the best of both worlds. 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.

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.