

# 24 HOURS

...IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

PROFESSIONAL PLANNER LOOKS AT THE GOINGS ON INSIDE GINN AND RUSS, A FINANCIAL PLANNING PRACTICE BASED IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY.

42



WITH ...  
**LUCIAN RUSS** *director, Ginn and Russ*

2015 AMP financial planner of the year for South Australia/Northern Territory, Lucian Russ, would have become a doctor in another life. "I was attracted to medicine because of how much of a difference you can make to other people's lives," he says.

"The difference to someone's health when you're able to remove a tumour is fantastic, and you think how great that would be to be able to do that."

Russ bypassed medicine owing to his aversion to blood, and when he graduated from school in Bristol he started an accountancy degree because he was good at maths. "I lasted three months and then quit," he says. "It was exactly the opposite of what I wanted to do with my life because it wasn't people-based." Instead, he took a year off to volunteer at homes in Bristol that helped institutionalised Britons reintegrate into society. He also did a volunteer stint at a psychiatric facility for children, which he found stressful but rewarding.

Russ returned to university, where he completed a BA in specialised humanities and a postgrad certificate in education; after working with that qualification, he looked to financial planning. While planning gave a degree of stability and predictability, he still had goals he wanted to achieve first.

"There were two things my wife and I wanted to do before we started a family: travel for two years, and run a charity," Russ says. "And that is what we did. We spent two years moving through Africa and South and Central America, and then we followed that up with two years running a not-for-profit in Cape Town, teaching work and business skills to unemployed young people in the township."

Russ and his wife have since moved to Adelaide and started a family, and while he is not able to heed the call of the wild as much anymore, he is enjoying great success at work.

WORDS JO LEGGATT

8.00

Home office. Pro bono Cancer Council client preparation. It is an honor and a privilege to be able to provide practical assistance and ease the burden for a client diagnosed with terminal cancer; but it is personally challenging. I remember the first call I ever made to a person I was trying to help.

*"Hello, can I please speak with ...?"*

*"No, I am sorry ... passed away yesterday."*

*"I am sorry to hear that. When you are ready to talk, I would like to help you with paperwork and practicalities."*

*"Thank you so much. The practicalities are overwhelming at a time when we can't cope with the ... It's so hard right now, most people don't know what to say to us."*

As financial planners, we sometimes take for granted our experience in making complex things simple. We know what documentation must be completed, and we have done it many times.

8.30

Dropping the boys off for school is made easy in a town where everything is only a five-minute drive away. I don't miss out on school assemblies when they are presented with an award, or sports day or parent-teacher meetings. Don't get me wrong, achieving work-life balance is not easy running a busy practice, but sometimes I do get it right and those sometimes feel great!

8.40

Arrive at my office and check on must-achieve goals for the day. Two client reviews and a new client meeting. It's essential to spend 20 minutes planning the day and making sure nothing gets missed or overlooked.



9.00

Calls to staff in my Adelaide office. With 12 staff, there is always something to talk through or work out. It's best to pick up the phone regularly, rather than rely on emails. I am one of the few practice principals to live in a small town and run a practice with a larger office in a capital city like Adelaide. I believe the small town gives the kids great values and experiences. My wife grew up in Alice Springs and Darwin, and has returned to Australia after many years abroad. We both feel that the territory is a great place for family, opportunity and adventure.

10.00

Client reviews. Mostly retired clients who have made tremendous contributions to the territory or South Australia. Country clients believe in deep, long-term relationships with people they trust and enjoy working with.

**JON DREYER**  
*Senior finance manager*

Having worked more than 25 years in banking and undertaking work that was predominantly "transactional", I discovered the absolute pleasure of applying my knowledge and experience in consulting; working with clients in Alice and Adelaide to strategise, implement, apply process and monitor outcomes that directly result in our clients achieving their desired goals. Unlike banking, the process is ongoing and requires partnering with the client as we seek their dreams together.

12.00

Walking lunch break. I prefer to eat healthily and take a walk at lunch, just to get out into the fresh air. If I need to make a

1.00

longish work call, I try to combine this with a walk to increase my step count for the day, as well as to get the energy flowing and to think through the issues fully.

New client meeting, from a referral. As a professional, it is one of the best compliments to receive a new client referral from an existing client. It is a responsibility I cannot take lightly, to achieve the best possible outcome with someone's life savings, hopes and dreams, values and goals. We use a Financial Road Map to understand each spouse's values independently and to establish what is important to them. Then we focus on date-defined goals and financial targets. Inspiring people to take action towards achieving their goals for reasons that are important to them is what it's all about. I find holding clients accountable to their own goals on a regular basis is an important part of adding value to our clients' lives. If we can provide them with a valuable experience and great results, then we receive more referrals and improve the lives of others.

**RUSHAN ATTYGALLA**  
*Customer services officer*

Working in a small town is a joy and bumping into our clients is an everyday pleasure. Whether it's at the supermarket, on a walk or at church, small towns breed close-knit communities. Meeting new clients from referrals is like meeting an old friend's friend. We treat them as warmly as possible and always go the extra mile.



# POST CARD



ALICE SPRINGS NT 0870 (UCL)	
People	<b>24,208</b>
Male	<b>12,063</b>
Female	<b>12,145</b>
Median age (years)	<b>33</b>
Families	<b>5668</b>
Total households	<b>8102</b>
Average people per household	<b>2.6</b>
Median total monthly income	<b>\$3460</b>
Average monthly household rental payment	<b>\$1200</b>
Average monthly household mortgage payment	<b>\$1950</b>

The most common occupations in Alice Springs (urban centres and localities) include professionals – 23.7 per cent; clerical and administrative workers – 15.4 per cent; community and personal service workers – 14.6 per cent; technicians and trades workers – 13.9 per cent; managers – 11.6 per cent; sales workers – 7.3 per cent; labourers – 7.2 per cent; and machinery operators and drivers – 4.3 per cent.

**SOURCE: ABS**

**2.30** ▶ Planning ahead for my one week in four that I spend in Adelaide to conduct client meetings and individual staff and team meetings. Making sure no review meetings or follow-ups have been missed by the team or me. Time away from Alice is precious, and one missed follow-up would be one too many.

**3.00** ▶ More travel planning. I go to the US quarterly to be part of a group that aims to be in the top 1 per cent of advisers in the world, as measured by value delivered to the client. There are 40 inspirational people from the UK, Canada, US and Australia in the group. Just as I do for my clients, I believe in having my own goals and a coach to support me in reaching them. My coach holds me accountable for what I want to do with my life. The future changes and evolves, and in order to achieve our goals, we must change and evolve with it.

**3.30** ▶ Review meeting with a long-term client. Some clients become friends and are a pleasure to work with and for. I don't take the trust clients put in me personally for granted. Financial security relieves so much of the stress and strain of life and allows people to focus on what is truly important – family, friends, health, growth and contribution.

**6.00** ▶ Complete post-meeting notes as soon as possible while the information is still fresh, and head home. I do try not to take work home, as I owe my wife and children my complete attention, just as I do my clients when I am with them. Sometimes, I drive my wife crazy by heading out for a run or a cycle, or I take the boys out for a kick of the soccer ball – which keeps everyone happy.

**SUBI KUMAR**  
*Customer services officer*

I have a passion for cooking for my two teenaged boys, who are always hungry and love my homemade cooking. I get up every day at 5am to prepare the perfect food. Helping clients during reviews is the same; it involves lots of preparation and exactly the right ingredients at the right time. The right spices make the perfect dish and it's the clients' smiles that make the perfect day and are my delight.