

# HUNGER TO HELP

*Two Brisbane businesswomen discover direction and friendship with The Hunger Project, helping impoverished communities do incredible things against all odds*

LEANNE EDMISTONE

Life-changing: Belinda Brosnan and Amelia Lee work with The Hunger Project. Picture: Richard Waugh

## AMELIA LEE, 40

I grew up in Sydney. I have one brother and my parents divorced when I was young. I relocated to Brisbane in 2000 when I met my now husband, Brandon, overseas. We have three kids – Griffin, 7, Zoe, 5, and Indigo, 3.

I decided at the age of 16 to be an architect. Once I finished my degree, I worked in a summer camp in New York State, where I met Brandon. A group of us travelled around America, went to Europe, then he and I got together as a couple and lived for a little while in London. Back in Brisbane, he went to uni to do physiotherapy, but we've been renovating houses for the past 10 years.

In 2013, my friend Belinda told me about The Hunger Project Uganda trip. We both had our own businesses and were really busy, but as she said, there's never going to be a good time. We joined forces and fundraised (\$20,000) together.

What really interested me was the sustainability of the model. They were working to actually empower members of the local community to change their own futures, so it was not a case of handouts or sponsoring a child or anything like that.

In November, Belinda and I went to Uganda for 10 days, travelling with a group of 20 women. We visited three epicentres, where the work is tailored to the needs of the community.

There's a central building that up to 20,000 villagers can access for training programs, health care, nursery school and a community hall.

We also went into the villages and met people in their homes, both those working with The Hunger Project and people who weren't, so we got to see the contrast and the difference it made to their lives.

The trip had a massive impact. It was really a life-changing event. It forced me to step out of my comfort zone and be a lot braver about asking for money. It was also the longest I'd ever been away from my kids and you're a long way away from home.

I was meeting people who, against all odds and adversity, are doing incredible things to change their families' future.

It made me realise we have so much privilege and abundance here, that really we have no excuse not to do amazing things, not to be extraordinary.

I came back and decided to leave my business. My husband and I had been talking about moving to acreage in northern New South Wales for eight or nine years and we've finally made the decision to actually do it.

We are really keen to start teaching our kids about global responsibility, and that they live a privileged life, not an entitled life.

It's been great to introduce them to the fact the world isn't just their little bubble.

There are much bigger things out there, and we can share what we have.

Belinda and I have known each other since about 2002.

Our friendship has grown considerably having had that experience together. Belinda is fierce and she has a fantastic, positive nature about her.

She has a great sense of humour, she's lots of fun. She's really just one of those vivacious, optimistic, anything-is-possible kind of people, but with a great sensitivity about what other people's concerns and needs might be.

What you see is what you get with Belinda, and it's great being around someone who is authentic and has such integrity.

## BELINDA BROSINAN, 39

I have two brothers. I grew up in Toowoomba, and studied business there. I've lived in Brisbane, Perth and overseas throughout my career. I'm single, and an aunt to six nieces and nephews.

I had a marketing background, then moved into property development and after that I became passionate about good leadership in organisations. I wanted to get engaged in something beyond just work. I felt like I was working 24/7 and was a bit one-dimensional.

I was looking for something that had a really sustainable impact and also used my skills. A lot of my medical friends have done this great work overseas, and I was like, what can I do?

How can I contribute?

I came across The Hunger Project. I just really like its philosophy, and I'd been reading a lot about the things causing hunger and poverty in the world, particularly the whole debate around educating women.

I got to the point where I thought I really can't do nothing – I always wanted to be engaged in something that was global. Their leadership model was what I was intrigued about, and I wanted to see that in action on the ground. That's how I got involved.

The biggest lesson for me is the notion of what I call a scarcity mindset and an abundance mindset. No matter where we are in the world, we all have the same issues – we don't have enough time, we don't have enough resources.

To see how opportunity could be created for people dealing with really big stuff, I went home

and said I have no excuses anymore. We have an abundance of everything here, and we often just don't draw on that. To see the volunteers mobilise the communities, and the work that they did was a real eye-opener. They were just so committed to the path they were on.

I was working in another business and when I came back I just realised I probably wasn't pursuing my true passions. If I was really honest with myself, I was probably quite fearful about that, and fearful about succeeding on my own. Now I'm the managing director of my own human relations and executive coaching business. In a practical sense, I'm learning to be OK with discomfort.

I'm going back to Uganda in November to lead a trip. The Hunger Project is now part of my life, something I'm completely committed to. Amelia and I are both very different people, in very different circumstances – I'm single, she has three children, she's an architect, I come from a different background.

What I'm really inspired about with Amelia is I've just seen her confidence grow extraordinarily. I've really seen her move out of her comfort zone. I sometimes reflect that it's easier for me because I don't have the responsibility of children.

Being with Amelia overseas, she was constantly curious and questioning things, and the ability to have someone like her to bounce all those things off, or the things that challenged us, that's where our friendship lies. We can have straight conversations and be really vulnerable with each other because there's this implicit trust. To have that sort of experience ... is a bond that you forge for a long time, not only with Amelia but with the other trippers. We all push one another and support one another through those changes. I feel like I've gained so much more than I've given as part of this process.

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