



## It's another world

We often read great articles from pilots flying in some pretty remote situations. Usually these items are all about the challenge of the flying and reaching people living in a remote setting, and that's fair enough because this is what MAF are all about; it's what draws people to serve God in these remote communities, and it meets a clear need for these people groups.

But there is another side to the story that most of them won't tell you, and if they do they will play it down as if it doesn't matter. But it does matter and it matters a whole lot! It is simply this: when you go to some of these locations you are literally going to the ends of the earth. And the ends of the earth aren't like anything you will have experienced before. Because of this there is only so much you can do to prepare yourself for the different environments, cultures and languages.



Take Tim and Georgie Vallance-Webb for example. Both of them worked as lawyers in England. Home for them was the commuter county of Surrey in a rural village in one of the cottages that make English countryside so attractive. There was new furniture, friends and family close by and an active, energetic church they were a part of. On top of that there were cinemas, shopping, heaps of traffic and the British weather! Then came the growing call of God and it was destination Arnhem Land.

So what did they find? Well first of all they found a land that looked nothing like the green fields of England – this was the green of the tropics with red earth, mangroves and myriad streams running through the land. With that came high humidity, temperatures in the thirties most of the year and either no rain or a lot all at once! Keeping cool is an issue and as Georgie says “You don't realize what a blessing fans, fridges and air conditioners are until the power cut comes along!” Unfortunately those are also part of life in Arnhem Land!

So what about social life? Well you know you are living remote when the highlight is a trip to a very small supermarket, which may or may not have fruit, vegetables and meat! There is a good swimming pool in the nearby town but apart from that self-entertainment is the order of the day and the beach features prominently. Mind you jelly fish & crocodile alerts make that interesting as well! Simple things like shopping for clothes take on a whole new level when the nearest mall is over 650km away!



So why would you do it? Having thought deeply about the sacrifice that God made for mankind on the cross, Tim and Georgie felt prompted to surrender their earthly treasures and leave home to serve with MAF. For Tim the desire to be involved with MAF began as a child in South Africa and simply became too loud a call to ignore. When they arrived they found a people who were intimately related to their homeland but who needed supplies, medical help and education support for ongoing quality of life. Spiritually most of them live in bondage and there is a huge work to be done here - cue the MAF pilot and his family! It is fair to say that without MAF much of the community support and spiritual input would be lost in Arnhem Land, especially since most missionary groups were unable to remain in Arnhem Land after the 1970's.

And that's not to say that the Vallance-Webbs don't enjoy life here either. They love the unique countryside and wild life - at least the ones that don't bite! The simpler life-style resonates with them and they count it a privilege to be able to live in community with the Yolngu people. It is nothing like the community they left behind, but it is one they are very happy to be a part of. Like many of the MAF families the transition has its hidden underside, but it's one that has been well worth the trials.