

Mosman Women In Business

Local business woman Carolyn Antony and her partner Robert have lived in Mosman for five years. They love the close proximity of the Mosman cafés and shops and just being a ferry or bus ride away from the city.

Carolyn is the founder of the Sydney based business *Talking of Sydney* – personal audio-guided walking tours. Established in 2002 the business has gone from strength to strength.

Carolyn explains how she came to start her own business:

I was born in England and have travelled independently to many countries in the world and during an eighteen-month world trip I wrote a 597 page travelogue based on my diaries, the humorous stories of travel and the social history of the places I visited. I am not sure if I am a frustrated travel writer or tour guide, but I have a need to know, explore and share.

I have always enjoyed describing places for the benefit of others, and not long after I arrived here in 1991 I had the germ of an idea. As an independent traveller, I felt there had to be a better way to get to know a city in a limited amount of time, other than taking a basic guided tour or reading a guide book. In museums and art galleries around the world I had often used audio guides to the paintings and artefacts, and this was a concept that I felt could be taken outside. This was 12 years ago, prior to the popularity of the internet, and as far as I had seen or heard, no other external audio guide had been produced. I registered the name Talking of Sydney Tours and began my market research, walking the streets and trawling through libraries.

My background is a sales professional with extensive experience in sales management within the hotel, serviced apartment and conference venue finding sector. With marketing, hotel consultancy, advertising, hospitality and tourism experience, so I am accustomed to the people service industry. At the time I was in demanding, full time employment and lacked the spare time to get a business off the ground. Ten years passed, and I felt that if I didn't walk away from the security blanket of the corporate world with all the advantages of a good, regular salary, it would never happen, and both the idea and my efforts over the years would be wasted. The dream would be lost.

The time had come so in March 2002, I committed my savings and time to the project full time. My additional research had led to sufficient copy even for a book, and this had to be ruthlessly selected and edited to fit within the 70-80 minute limit of CD's. It was hard, because I wanted everyone to know what I had learned about Sydney and its colonial past, because there are some great tales to be told. The edited version then had to be converted into a script for the recording studio. I had chosen the locally renowned Albert's Tiger recording studios and a delightful Australian professional stage and screen actor as my narrator, so I had to rapidly learn studio technique, because costs are high in this area.

Then I had to organise packaging, and I didn't like any of the available

packaging, so I had to design my own to give a unified look. I drew the maps for the tours and gave them to a graphic designer to improve on. Channel Nine television had decided to include it on a segment of "Sydney Getaway" and filming was due before the packaging was due to be complete. All stops were pulled out to at least produce a mock-up in case the mould makers didn't finish in time. By August 2003 I had "Sydney in a Day" and "The Rocks". In November 2003, I signed with a media distribution company who wanted to license and produce their own packaged version of my tours exclusively for the retail market within Australia and New Zealand. This was very good for me because it meant I

could leave retail distribution in their capable hands, sit back and await my royalties, just like a writer or recording 'artiste'. They have since replicated my other two tours, "Sydney City" and "Vision of a City". This has left me free to concentrate on all other markets, such as direct internet sales, corporate and associations, conferences and events, inbound, incentives, as well as seniors, backpackers and education so I'm kept fairly busy!

I was anxious to avoid dry facts and stilted narrative style, so whilst the listener enjoys present day Sydney, they hear lurid tales of convicts, early settlers and ghosts of the past, who lived and worked in the buildings they are looking at, narrated in a light style with humour and drama. The commentary describes the harsh and often debauched conditions of earlier

times. For easy listening, passages here and there are told in the character of a convict, a clerk, a Governor, a merchant and a soldier.

In addition to the self guided audio tours, I had been asked by a number of major corporate clients to provide private, customised orientation and sightseeing guided tours of Sydney and surrounding areas for their visitors. I have now added this service to my portfolio and they can be enjoyed in a luxury minibus, limousine or Mosman Coaches lovely old 1957 Ansair Clipper coach.

I joined Mosman Women in Business Networking, which is great to meet like-minded independent business women who have, or are trying to get businesses off the ground. We can all share our experiences and support, which is essential if you are a home based or a small business.

So here I am. I have had to learn a lot along the way, but it has all been rewarding in terms both of the experience I've gained and the people who have helped me. I made an early decision to work with only 'nice' people I could build a rapport with, and I can honestly say for me it has worked. I'm still amazed at how kind people can be, and treasure their generosity of spirit.

So next time you have overseas or interstate visitors point them towards Carolyn's business, pack them a picnic lunch and let them loose.

For more information on Talking of Sydney Tours visit www.talkingofsydney.com.au or call 9404 1771.

For more information on Mosman Women in Business contact Kathy Sui at Mosman Council on 9978 4106

