

THE AUSTRALIAN

# Travel + LUXURY

## FANTASY ISLANDS: Splendid and splashy seclusion

IN THE AUSTRALIAN TOMORROW



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# Reef hideaway reaches new level of opulence at The House



Infinity pool with a blissful view of the Reef

GEORGE EPAMINONDAS

At the pointy end of the Great Barrier Reef is an arresting new beach bungalow aimed at the pointy end of the market.

Up until recently, if you wanted to experience the intoxicating beauty of Lizard Island, you stayed at the namesake 40-room resort. Now a high-design holiday home, The House, is available for cashed-up guests who value privacy, luxury and a modernist temple alongside the Coral Sea.

The rarefied estate, a striking blend of concrete, glass and cop-

per, includes a three-bedroom abode and a self-contained cottage. It comes equipped with a staff of four, including a private chef, as well as access to three exclusive beaches. Rental rates start at \$16,000 per night with a three-night minimum.

"I wanted to prove that Australians can do design, interiors and experiences as well as anywhere in the world," says owner Steve Wilson, a Brisbane-based business identity. The project is a deeply personal one for Wilson. His father, John Wilson, was one of the original founders of the resort. A seabease on the site allowed for a

coastal cabana to be built, but it took him 32 years to do it.

"It's the best block of land on the reef," Wilson says. The property, a short drive from the resort, has an enviable location on the west coast of the island next to a kaleidoscopic fringing reef. Lodgers can also summon a Riviera motor yacht for exploring nearby Clam Garden, Cod Hole and the Ribbon Reefs.

"Nature has blessed us here, so we said let's build this strong, sculptural form and use that as a frame of endless views," he adds.

To do so, Wilson engaged architect James Davidson. As the

'Australians can do design, interiors and experiences as well as anywhere in the world'

STEVE WILSON THE HOUSE OWNER

principal of JDA Co, a Brisbane practice known for designing smart, climate-resistant buildings, Davidson is well versed in building for extreme weather.

"It's a beautiful site, but it's on a peninsula battered by strong

winds, rain and sun," Davidson says. Hence, the concrete shell, copper louvres and hardy New Guinea rosewood that resists buckling.

"I really want to share it with people," says Wilson, who imagines it will appeal to discerning locals marking their "annual rejuvenations", multigenerational families and a smattering of international visitors looking for over-the-top digs Down Under.

That thumbnail sketch is an accurate representation of the audience for upscale holiday rentals. The luxury market is abuzz with concepts such as "revenge travel"

(splurge holidays), "reunion travel" (family fiestas) and the allure of staycationing in Australia.

"Many people are still hesitant to travel overseas, with concerns over the varying pandemic management in each country, so luxury trips up north are proving popular," says Alexandra Ormerod, co-founder and managing director of Luxico, a leading rental company.

For Luxico, which manages \$700m worth of high-end properties across the country, business is surging. The agency offers tiers of homes, including "ultra villas" arrayed with personal butlers, daily

housekeeping and fully stocked fridges. A concierge can assist with everything from sourcing a baby grand piano to delivering French pastries each morning.

"Our ultra villas range from \$5000 to \$15,000 per night with optional service upgrades," adds Ormerod, pointing to multilayered mansions in the Whitsundays, Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast.

For more island-themed travel ideas, the latest edition of *Travel + Luxury* magazine will be published with *The Australian* on Friday. Available in most metropolitan editions and on all digital platforms

# Nurses 'didn't see Lyn' after vanishing

DAVID MURRAY MATTHEW CONDON



Lynette Dawson

Three nurses say they never saw Lynette Dawson working at Rockcastle Private Hospital, contradicting claims she was sighted there after disappearing.

Chris Dawson's trial for the alleged murder of his wife, Lyn, previously heard a couple claimed they saw the mother of two at the hospital in 1984, two years after she went missing.

Peter and Jill Breese were former neighbours of the Dawsons in Bayview on Sydney's northern beaches. They did not speak to the woman they thought was Lyn.

Ms Breese said when she called police in the 1980s to pass on the information, an officer told her Lyn was "under the pool".

Three nurses – Susan Cooper, Linda McCarthy and Deborah Brassey – have now told police they didn't see Lyn when they were working at the hospital around the period of the sighting.

There was lengthy legal argument on Wednesday on whether their evidence could be used at the trial after an objection from the defence.

"They've responded to the publicity this proceeding has achieved to say 'We were there at the time'," judge Ian Harrison SC said. The three nurses appeared by audiovisual link in a voir dire to assist Justice Harrison in deciding whether to exclude their evidence.

All three women said it was possible Lyn had worked there without them being aware of it.

Crown prosecutor Craig Everson SC said excluding the material "would not be consistent with the interests of justice", while defence barrister Pauline David said it had limited probative value and was unfairly prejudicial.

Ms David alleged the case involved "police misconduct", targeting retired detectives who had worked on the case.

The former officers made it "plainly clear" they were un-

interested in the possibility of Lyn being alive, she said.

There was a wilful failure to follow up leads and to look into evidence that may have assisted Mr Dawson, she added.

That was because of their fixed view from the outset that Mr Dawson had killed Lyn.

Justice Harrison said it was a very serious accusation, and highlighted the difference between inefficient or "sloppy" policing and impropriety.

Ms David also asked the court for more time to prepare, saying she still had to go through recordings and telecommunication intercepts.

Justice Harrison said speed and haste should not stand in the way of responding to the crown's case thoroughly and appropriately.

"We're here after 40 years – days can hardly matter," he said.

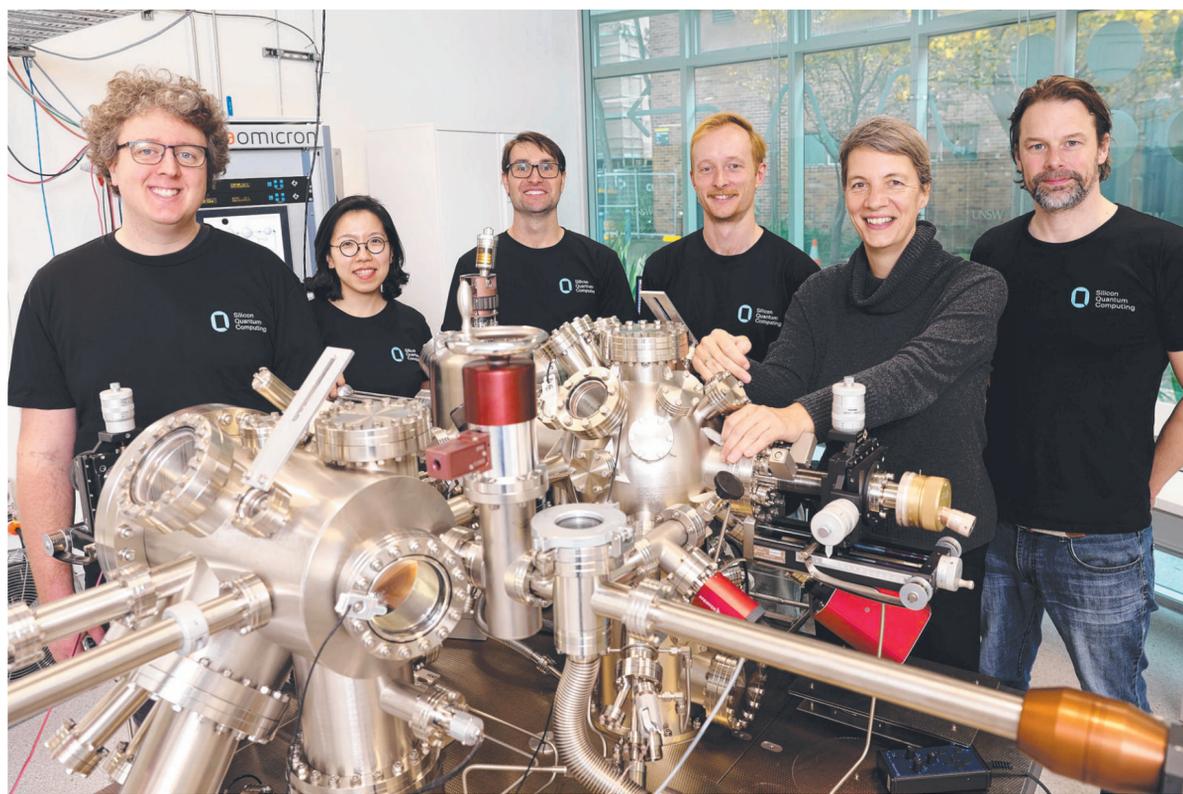
Justice Harrison asked Mr Everson if the crown would argue Lyn's death should be inferred from things other than banking, taxation, immigration and health records.

"Yes, Lyn Dawson hasn't come through this door or the door of the inquest or made any contact," Mr Everson said.

The fact she hadn't was relevant in determining whether she was alive, he said.

Mr Everson confirmed he would ask the judge to consider if a woman close to her children and family would have refrained from contacting them if she was alive.

Up to seven crown witnesses are scheduled to give evidence on Friday, followed by a final two from Monday.



Professor Michelle Simmons, second from right, with some of her team: Sam Gorman, Yousun Chung, Mitchell Kiczynski, Matt Donnelly and Joris Keizer

# Aussies in leap for quantum power

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everyone just can't believe it," Professor Simmons said. "One of the young students on the team just didn't think it would work. He was just, wow. It worked straight away."

SQC expects it will be five years before commercial products are created but Professor Simmons is keen to reach out to business.

"We are going to be out there looking for partners, tell us what your molecules are that you are having trouble understanding," she said.

"We are very keen to see what people have as immediate challenges for their company."

"We want to engage with them and start solving it."

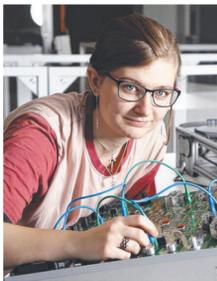
SQC's team of world-class quantum scientists, engineers and technicians have had to keep the secret of the milestone for weeks.

"We've had multiple secret celebrations but, I have to admit, we are looking forward to the end of the week where they can all let their hair down," she said.

"They are super excited to tell everyone."

# Engineers hit 'boring' maths teaching

NATASHA BITA EDUCATION EDITOR



TERTIUS PICKARD/NCA NEWSWIRE Engineer Talia Castley

Engineers Australia has criticised the "boring" teaching of maths and plans to parachute retired engineers into classrooms to teach hands-on maths and science.

Chief Engineer Jane MacMaster on Wednesday said Australia needed more students, especially girls, studying higher level maths at school to prevent skills shortages for hi-tech industry.

She said much of maths teaching in schools was so theoretical that children and teenagers could not relate to it and found it boring.

"I am concerned there aren't enough kids studying maths," Ms MacMaster said. "It's taught in a theoretical, abstract way and the kids are bored by it."

"I would like to see maths taught in a more practical way so students understand how it's used, and can be inspired by what it can potentially be used for."

"We should consider making maths compulsory (in high school) again – it doesn't have to

be advanced level maths, but numeracy is a useful skill for life."

Ms MacMaster – who is on the technology working group of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority – is working with the federal Education Department to try to recruit more engineers to teach STEM subjects in schools.

She has written to federal Education Minister Jason Clare to suggest scientists and engineers

be parachuted into school classrooms without having to complete a two-year master's degree in teaching.

"It would be great to explore alternative ways of becoming a teacher if you have many years of industry experience," she said.

"If we want more STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) teachers, particularly those who can teach mathematics and science in an applied manner, it's something we should explore. We need to reignite inspiration and passion for STEM."

Ms MacMaster said only 11 per cent of engineers were women, in part because of a stereotype that the profession was "blokey and boring".

"We need more women in engineering for productivity reasons, and for diversity of thinking," she said.

Aspiring engineer Talia Castley, 25, settled on electrical engineering at Griffith University after starting degrees in archaeology and forensic science.

She plans a career creating communication devices, from

satellites to mobile phones and computers, and is also interested in how magnetic fields are implemented in car design. "I fell in love with the practical side of engineering," she said.

Despite the campaign for more women to study engineering, a new Engineers Australia survey reveals many female engineers report a sexist workplace culture. One-third of female engineers felt like they needed to act like "one of the boys" to fit in, compared to one in 10 women in other professions, while 18 per cent reported bullying, harassment or exclusion of women in the workplace, compared with 13 per cent of women working in other fields. Despite the challenges, most felt "passionate about their work".

Australian Women in STEM ambassador professor Lisa Harvey Smith said engineering was a "natural career path" for women in many parts of the world: "It makes no sense to ignore 51 per cent of our population in the design and construction of our infrastructure and technologies."

# Probe finds excessive force 'endemic' in jails

ANGELICA SNOWDEN

There are endemic and persistent issues around the use of unreasonable force in Victorian prisons, an investigation by the state's ombudsman has found.

Deborah Glass handed down a damning report into excessive use of force on Wednesday after an investigation into eight allegations of unreasonable force used at the Metropolitan Remand Centre and the Melbourne Assessment Prison.

Ms Glass reported that while only four out of the eight could be substantiated, all cases demonstrated concerning behaviour or poor decision-making by officers. "Allegations of unreasonable use of force do not appear to be declining," the report read.

"The incidents in this report present a disturbing picture; even when the allegations were not substantiated, we found officers used force on people with acquired brain injuries or other vulnerabilities because the prison environment had created a situation where it became necessary."

It was acknowledged in the report that prisoners could be violent and unpredictable and force might be necessary, but a culture of silence – where officers do not report wrongdoing committed by their fellow guards – is pervasive.

"The evidence from these investigations and other complaints received by my office, combined with previous reports and reviews, illustrates the persistent and endemic nature of the problem," it read.

The report revealed allegations a prisoner was choked in his cell, another was threatened and punched in the head and one man was thrown against a wall.

After an investigation into the choking incident, which took place in an unmonitored cell, the Ombudsman concluded that the prison officer had used unreasonable force.

Some officers escalated situations rather than defused them, and an alarming number of incidents occurred in CCTV blind-spots, the investigation found. Prisoners were also reluctant to report unreasonable use of force because of the power imbalance between them and guards.

Ms Glass made 12 recommendations to address the use of excessive force, including greater use of body-worn cameras to boost officer accountability and extra use of CCTV to monitor "high-risk" locations.

In the three-year period between July 1, 2018, and June 30, 2021, the Department of Justice and Community Safety received 142 allegations of staff-on-prisoner assaults.

In the same three-year period, the ombudsman received 139 allegations of unreasonable use of force.

There are 14 prisons in Victoria, three of which are privately operated. The MRC and the MAP are two of the 11 publicly operated prisons in the state.

The MRC and MAP are both maximum security prisons.

MRC holds about 700 people who are awaiting trial, appeal and sentencing.

# Landmark legal ruling for gig workers in payout for death on the job

ANGELICA SNOWDEN

A delivery driver's family has been awarded \$827,400 in compensation after he died working a shift, in a landmark legal ruling.

It is the first time an Australian gig-economy worker has been acknowledged as an employee, after Xiaojun Chen died when he was

hit by a bus on his bike working for food delivery service Hungry Panda in Sydney two years ago.

Mr Chen's surviving family – including his wife Lihong Wei, their two children and his grandfather – will receive the money from the NSW workers compensation scheme, following a decision handed down by the state's personal injury commission.

Slater and Gordon secured the workers death benefit on their behalf. Practice group leader Jasmina Mackovic said the decision is an Australian first.

"To our knowledge, this is the first case where there has been an admission that a gig economy driver has been considered a worker," Ms Mackovic said in a statement.

"Gig-economy workers and their families are usually denied any entitlements because they are considered independent contractors rather than employees, meaning they are unable to access workers' compensation and other benefits such as annual leave and sick leave," she said.

Ms Mackovic said gig-economy companies do not currently

provide adequate protection to workers, many of whom are migrants and are "particularly vulnerable".

"We are only going to see more workers die and be injured on our roads with limited rights to compensation if something doesn't change," she said.

Hungry Panda agreed Mr Chen was an employee and admit-

ted liability for compensation after his death, according to the NSW personal injury commission decision.

Transport Workers' Union national secretary Michael Kaine welcomed the decision and acknowledged Ms Wei's campaign to increase gig workers' rights.

"She has bravely spoken truth to power," he said.