

Picture perfect

Chalk and cheese prove to be a successful combination for a happy couple who work, rest and play together



GRAHAM CAMPBELL-RYDER 70 //
MARGARET CAMPBELL-RYDER // 59 DIRECTORS,
RED HILL GALLERY

He says:

I remember Margaret being enthusiastic when we first met, and we had a lot of fun together. The year before we married we bought a Queenslander in Bardon and did it up. We now have a unit down the Coast that Margaret gets away to when I'm annoying her too much.

We're a good team. We bounce off each other – it comes back to enjoying what we do. In the gallery, Margaret does the presentations, the curatorial side of the gallery. She does the hanging; co-ordinates with the artists. It's a good challenge at our age to have a business like this.

I suppose anyone can own a gallery, but we brought old-fashioned service to it. That goes back to our retail days. We treat everyone who walks through the door the same way, millionaires or not, because you never know who they are going to be.

I was in ICU for three weeks and being unwell scared me. But now I have the greatest faith in doctors. I'm good now and I'm enjoying working – we both enjoy working. I don't know what we'd be like if we didn't have something to do. I can't see myself stopping.

Margaret makes our relationship fun. We enjoy life. We like getting away and we enjoy the family – my sons from my first marriage and our grandchildren. I'm quite content with life.

She says:

We met in the 1980s when Graham was the managing director of Brisbane City Heart and I was the general manager of fashion chain Splendiferous. He talked me into becoming the first female board member of Brisbane City Heart, which was a great experience.

Graham had such drive; I'd never met anyone who had so much passion for his work and the city, and we became friends.

Eventually, that drive and passion just took me over and we married in 1989. I was amazed at how alive somebody could be; how somebody could get up every day and love life and work. He still does – I'm not like that. You can't talk to me until after 10am.

We bought the gallery in 1998 and have defined roles there. We used to share an office but Graham's organised and I'm not, which drove him to distraction.

I do the layouts when we have a show and he'll come in and say, "that's not right", and I'll get prickly. But I'll think about it for a few hours and often have to admit that he's right.

I didn't realise how well we worked together until Graham had a major health scare and we nearly lost him. I had to run everything and it was just so hard – it's given us more understanding of each other's roles.

Graham is a big teddy bear – his bark is worse than his bite. What you see is not what you get – he's actually sensitive and shy, although no one else who knows him would believe that.