

New Zealand Wins Elizabeth's Battle Of The Heart Calling Pukekohe Home



Elizabeth du Plessis has two places in her heart, the land of her birth, South Africa and her adopted homeland, New Zealand. It's a magical marriage that has given Elizabeth and her family the world, a new start in life.

"I love South Africa. My whole family is there and it was a good life. We are a very close family. I came to New Zealand because I was married to a Kiwi and when my marriage broke up, I was torn, not knowing whether to stay or to go back to South Africa."

Elizabeth had offers to return to her job as a real estate consultant in her home town, while New Zealand offered only an uncertain future.

"I started working at Barfoot &Thompson in April 2000. It was hard going with the real estate market in recovery mode and few

Franklin has embraced Elizabeth and her family, and they in turn, are happy to call Pukekohe home.

sales in Tuakau. It was a struggle getting established, gaining the success needed for credibility and meeting my family's needs." In November of that year, Elizabeth and

her three children sat down to discuss their future. They had come to New Zealand with high hopes, only to see the dream dashed.

"Becoming a solo mother was humbling and becoming a state beneficiary was foreign to me, it was not an option. Where would we rebuild our family life – in South Africa, where my parents would happily share their home or in New Zealand, with all of its unknowns? My decision rested with the children, on their feelings and desires. Heather, the oldest, was 16 and at Tuakau College. She said that this was where all her friends were. She did not want to return to South Africa and start again. Ian, who was 14, was also at college and he and nine year old John agreed with Heather.

"We struck a bargain. We would make New Zealand our home, but had to pull together as a family. Each of the children had to take more responsibility at home and help me in my business. And that's what they did. With the help of our church family at Living Waters, who found us a rundown cottage to rent in Belgium Road and helped us shift and tidy up, our New Zealand journey began."

Once living in Pukekohe, Elizabeth refocused her business efforts and restarted the process of building credibility in a new area. The days were long, with client and customer appointments by day and flyer deliveries – with the help of the children – by night. The children also shared home chores and meal preparation. The family's dedication paid off as Elizabeth's reputation gained momentum. The one distraction was when James Heard returned to Barfoot & Thompson's Pukekohe office. The couple married in May 2004. Elizabeth's career had truly taken off. She topped the sales for Barfoot & Thompson in 2004-2005 and in 2006-2008, joined their elite sales group 'The Top 25,' a standing she has maintained ever since. Over the past five years she has built up a personal support team, working alongside husband James and daughter-in-law Jayne. Being part of a larger firm means Elizabeth is always up to date with approved industry practice and trends, with the firm's buying power minimising expenses for clients.

"The real challenge has been the change in the market, with people becoming more cautious and worried about buying and selling properties. It's so important to be aware of people's feelings and to adjust the pace to their needs. Sometimes, I have to be creative