



When Natalie and Steve Leslie decided to create a new real estate business in Ballina they brought with them over 50 years of industry experience. They were determined that they would set lofty standards in customer service and satisfaction and staff care. They are now the proud owners of Harcourts Northern Rivers, we caught up with Natalie to find out more.

How did the business come about?

Steve and I owned an agency on the North Shore of Sydney up until 2005, when we decided to make the move to the Northern Rivers. Our passion for real estate then took us on a journey of working for 2 other companies in the area. During this time we noticed an opportunity to fill a void in the Ballina market, providing a high quality level of customer service and a fresh and vibrant approach. This business was formed in 2011 and branded as Elders Ballina. 5 years later with the business being well established and with the vision to take the business to the next level, we have joined the Harcourts group. A global franchise offering state of the art support and technology – this now allows our business to cover all of the Northern Rivers.

What is the key business focus for your success?

We have a business plan and a strategy and we know it intimately. We are constantly updating this plan and seeding our further opportunities.

Investing in knowing who our customers are, and more than ever, keeping them loyal to our company and our brand

Real Estate is all about people, both our customers and our employees. We ensure that our staff are on the same page with us regarding our growth strategy and overall mission of the business

Technology is also key for our business success and we ensure that all our people are equipped with the right tools to be the best and most progressive sales and property management team in the region.

How do you ensure high quality customer service?

We have a Policy and Procedure model with strict guidelines on the processes and services provided to the community. Our office culture is paramount to the high level of customer service – all staff within the Harcourts team enjoy coming to work each day and it shows in the way in which each and every staff member deals with their clients and the public in general

As a team what sets Harcourts apart?

Harcourts Northern Rivers adopts a consultative approach to real estate, focusing on working with people, not at them. We put time into listening and understanding our clients wants and needs to ensure we provide

**People First
Doing the right thing
Being courageous
Fun and Laughter**

a personalised service. We have a 'client for life' philosophy through the provision of the finest level of service. This is summed up in the Harcourts motto

Historically real estate agents have had a difficult reputation. How do you address this?

Unfortunately, many industries struggle with reputation – usually due to one or two 'bad eggs'. In NSW a selling agent can complete a very simple 3 module course, pay \$115 for a Certificate of Registration – and can start selling real estate!

We focus heavily on quality training, a new employee entering the industry into

our business is firstly paid very well and secondly completes an intensive 3 month training program before being allowed to deal with sellers and buyers. They are paid well rather than commission only and debit/credit systems, so there's no 'desperation' to put a 'sale at any cost' together. This ensures that they are fully equipped to provide the service at the level expected.

Communication is also key, we commit at the beginning of the relationship to the level of communication that the client requests and we stand by that commitment.

How is the business involved in the community?

Harcourts Northern Rivers sponsors numerous community activities including the Ballina Prawn Festival, the Bangalow BBQ and bluegrass festival, The Ballina hospital Auxiliary craft show to name a few. We are also major sponsors of the Ballina Soccer Club and Shark Watch – a new innovative program protecting ocean goers in the region.

When you're not working, where do you go out and about?

We love to eat out and enjoy discovering new eateries in the area. Also, with three children you can understand that there's not a lot of spare time for us. We spend a lot of time chauffeuring everyone to sports and social activities. But we also commit to family time and enjoy 4WD and camping, with our next big trip rapidly approaching we will be travelling to Cape York with 2 other families. We also have a 10acre property in the Hinterland that takes up considerable time to maintain.