

# a brighter tomorrow

WORDS INGRID NELSON PHOTOS DUKE AND GYPSY

*Having experienced the pain and heartache of a bitter divorce first hand, Alvia Turney is determined to help other couples avoid the unnecessary financial and emotional pitfalls of a separation. Together, with a team of like-minded legal experts, she is helping couples find happiness again through her business, Act 4 Tomorrow Separation Specialists.*

ALVIA WEARS WITCHERY TOP \$79.95, PANTS \$129.95 AND SHOES \$149.95, AND AJIE 'AKIRA' NECKPIECE \$90; LOUISE WEARS WITCHERY KNIT \$129.95 AND SHORTS \$79.95 AND AJIE 'BILLION AIR' NECKLACE \$79; ROB WEARS JEANSWEST SHIRT \$39.99, JEANS \$99.99 AND BELT \$39.99, AND FLORSHEIM SHOES \$169.95 FROM MYER; TRACY WEARS BASQUE BLAZER \$139.95 AND TOP \$59.95 AND PIPER JEANS \$79.95 FROM MYER, WITCHERY SANDALS \$99.95, AND AJIE 'SAY IT LIKE THAT' NECKPIECE \$90. SHOT ON LOCATION AT A SPARKS ARCHITECTS HOME IN SUNSHINE BEACH. HAIR BY UPTOWN HAIR STUDIO, MAKE-UP BY PURE NAVA AND MELINA DEE.





ALVIA WEARS COOPER ST DRESS  
\$199.95 FROM MYER, WITCHERY SHOES  
\$149.95 AND AJIE 'THE EMPRESS' EARRINGS \$60.

## ALVIA TURNEY

“I started the business because I had no one to step me through what was happening to me at the time,” says Alvia. “I found it so confusing and overwhelming and emotionally distressful, which affected my ability to function on a daily basis. And because it dragged on for two years, by the time we both came out the other end, we had spent enough money which would have put our boys through university and we could no longer speak to each other.”

“It created a big divide in the family that remained for 10 years. In that time, we have had two weddings, which should have been happy occasions, instead there was terrible animosity in the room. I didn’t want anyone else to go through that, and then to find out that it was completely unnecessary was so frustrating.”

“That’s when I thought, right, that’s it, I’m going to do something about it and Act 4 Tomorrow Separation Specialists was born four years ago.”

It’s a story that many people can relate to, but Alvia says it doesn’t have to be that way.

Providing support to help couples navigate through the angst and confusion of separation and divorce, Alvia and her team aim to achieve a positive outcome for all parties, avoiding the court system where possible, often saving couples tens of thousands of dollars, not to mention years of unnecessary animosity, especially when children are involved.

“Aside from the emotional support, my aim is to prepare clients with what they need from a practical point of view, so that when they do eventually sit down with a lawyer, they are emotionally ready to listen,” says Alvia.

“A lot of people already have an idea of how they would like to distribute things and our system works so well that generally within two months everything can be wrapped up nicely and they have an outcome they are both happy with.”

“The longer the process takes, the more likely it is that people start hearing from outside influences like family and friends, they start to get frustrated and angry and that is when it can start to go pear-shaped. The aim is to remind them what the big picture is and help them come to terms with what has happened. The quicker people can move on the sooner they can find happiness again.”

While a marriage breakup is never easy, Alvia says through respectful conflict resolution in a calm and non-judgemental environment, the majority of couples can reach an amicable agreement without unnecessary legal costs. But she is quick to add, there is more to a happy settlement than just mediation.

Alvia says, “We project manage the whole separation from breakup, sometimes even assist with planning when a separation should take place and how to deliver the message, so it has the least impact on everyone involved.”

“**LIVE** your life with someone you **LOVE** and who loves you, anything less is just selling yourself **SHORT.**”

“We walk you through what you need to do, for example organising the to-do list, we assist you in gathering the information on assets and liabilities, it’s all too big a job for one person. Knowing that someone is there with you in your time of grief and overwhelm, greatly reduces the fear. We hear from many clients that they remained in unhappy relationships because they felt the problems associated with leaving were too difficult.”

Working with three family lawyers who are equally as passionate about helping couples to settle out of court and avoid unnecessary financial costs and mental strain, Alvia has created a dream team who are making the whole process so much easier.

“I’ve found the best three lawyers,” says Alvia. “They are like-minded, they share the same philosophy, they really respect the clients and they want the best outcome as quickly as possible.”

Looking back over the past four years since Act 4 Tomorrow Separation Specialists opened its doors, Alvia laments on just how much both she and the business have grown and she credits that growth to the support of the wonderful

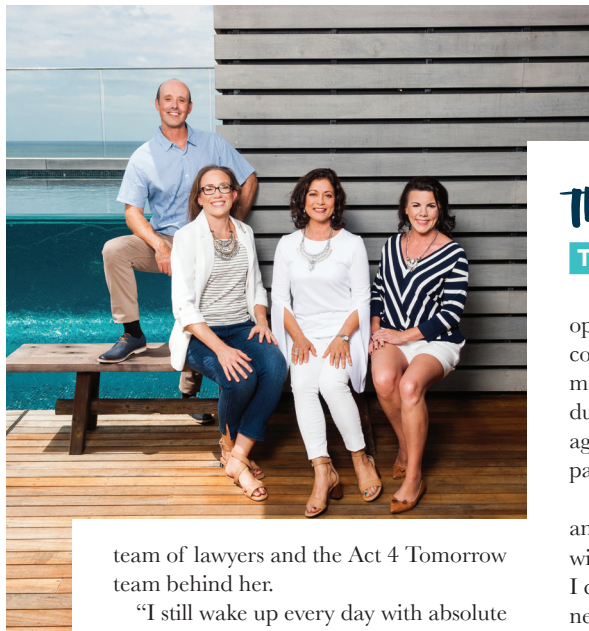


PHOTO BY CHRISTINA STUBBS



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team of lawyers and the Act 4 Tomorrow team behind her.

"I still wake up every day with absolute passion for what I do and I would not be where I am today if it was not for the people who have worked tirelessly alongside me," says Alvia.

"It was a startup business, so my team have had to work out of hours, given their time so freely, come in on weekends, it has been phenomenal. I am so very proud of everyone."

Having helped hundreds of people from all walks of life find happiness again, she says the secret to their success is a non-judgemental approach, where each party is treated fairly and with respect.

"I think my ethos comes from my father," says Alvia. "His philosophy was always; do onto others as you would want them to do onto you."

"I really believe everyone is right, in their opinion it is so, it is their story and that's what they believe. The story is however irrelevant really, it's the outcome that's important and that is how we can remain impartial, we don't judge, we just move them from story, to a happy ending and new beginning."

And although Alvia may be in the business of helping couples to separate, she is quick to point out she is not an advocate for divorce. In fact, the most rewarding part of her job is seeing people move from unhappy to happy again, often with a new partner and a second chance at love.

"It's just lovely to see people with a new start. I think the ones who have impacted me the most are the older generation – those in their late 60s and 70s who have had a new start, perhaps they've gone back to university or jumped out of a plane. One older lady said she would never marry again and yet within the year she met the love of her life."

"Live your life with someone you love and who loves you, anything less is just selling yourself short."

## The Dream Team

### TRACY PRICE

They may have been representing opposite parties but there was an instant connection between family lawyer and mother-of-two Tracy Price and Alvia during a phone conversation three years ago that was to be the beginning of a great partnership.

"I remember I was working for a client and we had reached an agreement with his wife who was a client of Act 4 Tomorrow. I called the organisation thinking it was a new law firm and asked if her client would prefer consent orders or a BFA and I was met with absolute silence, then Alvia said, 'You are asking us what our client would like!?' Then I received a phone call from Alvia a few days later asking if we could meet for coffee and we discovered we were very much on the same page, we were actually trying to help people."

Employed by Griffiths Parry Lawyers, Tracy has been a family lawyer for 12 years and says she was instantly drawn to Act 4 Tomorrow based on their unique system that puts the client first.

"There are other mediation centres, but there is nothing quite like Act 4 Tomorrow that I have seen in all the years I have been practicing law, they really fill a gap," says Tracy.

"They just want to help people and that's my focus. I do litigate of course, that's part of my job and some matters do need that unfortunately, but for the most part I try to keep people out of court and that is what they are trying to do too, so it works really well."

And if the number of Tracy's clients reaching an amicable agreement out of court is anything to go by, it's a winning combination.

"It's saving people money, emotional stress and time devoted to litigation. I have clients litigating in the Family Court system at all times but the percentage who are now settling out of court since I have been working with Alvia seems to be higher," she says.

TRACY WEARS WAYNE COOPER  
DRESS \$129.95 FROM MYER AND  
WITCHERY SANDALS \$99.95.







ALVIA WEARS WITCHERY BLOUSE \$99.95, SKIRT \$129.95 AND SHOES \$149.95, AND AJIE 'FIRST TO SPEAK' EARRINGS \$79; LOUISE WEARS WITCHERY TOP \$79.95 AND SHORTS \$79.95, AND AJIE 'SAY IT LIKE THAT' NECKPIECE \$90; ROB WEARS JEANSWEST SHIRT \$49.99, PANTS \$79.99 AND BELT \$39.99, AND FLORSHEIM SHOES \$169.95 FROM MYER; TRACY WEARS WITCHERY DRESS \$149.95 AND SANDALS \$99.95, AND AJIE 'THE EMPRESS' EARRINGS \$60.

And while Tracy, as a lawyer, can only act for one party to maintain independence, she says the ability Act 4 Tomorrow has in building a relationship with both sides, is key to their success.

"Sometimes we have to write letters and that can come across as quite threatening and demanding and that is where Act 4 Tomorrow can come from a different perspective. They can build a relationship with both sides, whereas we are unable to do that," she says.

"Act 4 Tomorrow helps people in a very different way. They temper down the whole acrimony of the typical Family Law process."

Calm, poised and approachable, it's not hard to see why Tracy is so highly regarded as a family lawyer and perfectly suited to helping couples through what can be a harrowing time and she wouldn't have it any other way.

"I absolutely love what I do. It's interesting, no two days are the same, you are in court one day and mediation the next and most importantly you get to help people," she says.

"Some of the most enjoyable work I do is with Act 4 Tomorrow; it's a really nice place to be, the girls are nice, it's warm and welcoming and we really work as a team.

"At the end of the day I spent years representing clients in the Family Court system. I have seen first hand the emotional and financial toll it takes upon people. That's why my focus today is to help people navigate their separation as amicably and cost effectively as possible. Act 4 Tomorrow has a similar approach and that's why I believe we work so well together."

## ROB HOLLIS

With almost two decades of experience under his belt, family lawyer and father-of-two, Rob Hollis, knows a thing or two about helping couples navigate the separation process.

Originally from the United Kingdom, Rob worked for one of the largest provincial firms in the Hertfordshire, Essex, Cambridge area before emigrating to the Sunshine Coast in 2006.

After completing his conversion studies at QUT in 2007, Rob started at Greenhalgh Pickard in December 2008 and has been there ever since.

Rob contacted Alvia 'out of the blue' having read an article about Act 4 Tomorrow that really resonated with him and what he liked to achieve.

"I was reading a magazine and Alvia's face popped up. She was clearly focused on resolving family law disputes out of court and for me any system that can avoid court, where appropriate, is good. So I

"I'm concerned with their long-term best interests, and for that they need to hear the **GOOD** and the **BAD**. I believe we, as a lawyers, have a **DUTY** to do this."

dropped her an email and it all went from there," says Rob.

"I truly think the real benefit of the process with Act 4 Tomorrow is that you have like-minded lawyers working together. It wouldn't work otherwise.

"I didn't know Tracy [Price] was involved prior to meeting with Alvia but I had worked with Tracy professionally before and we both appeared to have the same focus on settlement where possible."

Driven to ensure an appropriate and timely settlement, with the least amount of time and stress, Rob says this is possible to achieve if all parties are on board.

"If clients are committed to an out-of-court settlement and willing to participate

ROB WEARS JEANSWEST SHIRT \$59.99, JEANS \$99.99 AND BELT \$39.99 AND FLORSHEIM SHOES \$169.95 FROM MYER.

"At the end of the day, achieving what is **BEST** for the client is the most important thing and that is what we are all **AIMING** for."





constructively, there is a very good chance of settling through this process. If they are looking to argue and have their day in court, this process is not for them.”

The only male lawyer in the team, Rob is renowned for his fair and upfront approach, which he says ensures realistic expectations among his clients.

“If you give clients realistic, honest advice at the start, it solves problems. People often don’t want to hear what I say initially however I’m concerned with their long-term best interests, and for that they need to hear the good and the bad. I believe we, as lawyers, have a duty to do this,” he says.

“Ultimately a court might tell them the very same things, after they have spent a lot of time, money and stress.

“Often there is a perception of a female bias in the system but I think once you break it down, and explain it fully, people can see it as much fairer. Men often seem to prefer figures so when you put it to them in black and white, they get it.”

Rob says working closely with Act 4 Tomorrow allows him to focus on the essence of what the client is wanting to know and achieve, Alvia already having done the background work to prepare them for that part of the process.

“The background information Alvia provides is a great benefit to us. It gives us a good starting point of where the client is at and saves us a lot of time,” says Rob.

“It means we can generally drill straight down to the issues. At the end of the day, achieving what is best for the client is the most important thing and that is what we are all aiming for.”



“There is something about family law and the people and the **RELATIONSHIPS** which **RESONATES** with me.”

#### LOUISE WARD

Describing herself as, “Not a typical lawyer”, Louise Ward has worked hard to focus separating families on avoiding the court process and resolving their differences.

“There is something about family law and the people and the relationships which resonates with me,” she says.

A lawyer for 12 years, Louise gained wide experience and established herself as a family lawyer in Brisbane and moved to London where she worked and travelled the UK and Europe before returning home to the Sunshine Coast and opening her own practice.

“I started my own business to practice family law my way. I wanted to give sensible, clear advice early on and provide people with the information and opportunity to work it out themselves rather than take an aggressive approach.”

It was this calm and measured approach that led a mutual friend to introduce Alvia and Louise based on their like-minded ethos and they formed an instant bond.

“We got along straight away – we had the same values and goals,” says Louise, who was the first of the three lawyers to partner with Alvia, paving the way for what would become a unique partnership between them and the other two lawyers who would later join them.

“The separation process with Act 4 Tomorrow promotes informed decision making. Each client is provided with independent legal advice and the opportunity to engage in respectful communications to resolve a range of matters that are specific to their circumstance.



LOUISE WEARS WITCHERY DRESS \$139.95. NF LIVING CUSHION \$39.95 AND DOMAYNE THROW \$229.96 FROM DOMAYNE, MAROOCHYDORE HOMEMAKER CENTRE.

“Family law has evolved. We are aware of the impact of conflict on our children. We are aware of how our brain responds during prolonged trauma. We are placing greater importance on our relationships, and separating families are recognising the benefits of maintaining a working family unit or moving on with their lives with respect and dignity.”

The gentle and softly-spoken mother-of-two and step-mother-of-two lives happily with her partner on the Sunshine Coast. Louise’s days are busy but she has never been more content and happy. She says starting her own business was the best decision she ever made and one which led her to a fantastic partnership with Act 4 Tomorrow.

“Act 4 Tomorrow is a breath of fresh air for separating families, with their ability to create constructive dialogue and an enduring resolution.” ■