



*When Sharen and Terry Donovan came to Marysville 16 years ago they never could have imaged they would now own two award-winning bed and breakfast businesses.*

## Awards for Dalrymples

by **Tammy Lovett**

SHAREN AND Terry Donovan had almost given up on finding their dream holiday home.

Three years into their search the couple from Melbourne was on the verge of defeat, that was until they stumbled upon Melina, now known as Amelina Cottages, in Marysville. The Donovans purchased the property within ten minutes of laying eyes on it and almost instantaneously their love of Marysville and its community was sealed.

That was 16 years ago.

Today Sharen and Terry are the proud proprietors of Dalrymples Guest Cottages and Amelina Cottages.

Late last year the couple received some exciting news. Dalrymples Guest Cottages

placed third in the RACV Star Ratings Gold List awards for Victoria's best overall guest experience for self-catering accommodation and Amelina Cottages placed ninth in the same category.

Dalrymples also took out second place for the best overall self-catering guest experience in the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges, while Amelina Cottages placed sixth.

In 2015 Dalrymples Guest Cottages was also awarded a TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence.

All awards are based on guest reviews and the results left Terry and Sharen speechless.

When the Donovans first came to Marysville looking for a holiday home they didn't come looking for a business to go with it. But ➤



*Modern styling and luxurious finishes create a relaxing space for guests at Dalrymples Guest Cottages in Marysville.*





*Tall gum trees, brightly coloured flowers and bushes along with hazelnuts, figs and kiwi fruit flourish in the gardens at Dalrymples Guest Cottages, providing the ideal home for birds and wildlife.*

fate had something else in mind and attached to Amelina was a small holiday rental business.

“We didn’t even want to have a bed and breakfast,” Sharen said.

“It’s funny how life brings you to something.”

“We just knew it was the right thing to do.”

After falling in love with the area, Sharen and Terry decided to make Marysville more than a holiday home. In 2002 Dalrymples Guest Cottages came on the market and within five weeks Sharen and Terry became fully-fledged Marysville locals, making the move

permanent and becoming Dalrymples’ newest hosts.

Bob and Di McNamara established the business in 1991; their country cottage décor and hospitality gave guests a lifelong affinity with Marysville and Dalrymples.

Forty percent of those who visit Amelina and Dalrymples are returning guests. Sharen and Terry continue to welcome people who stayed at these bed and breakfasts years before they even laid eyes on them.

“We have people who were married in Marysville 50 or 60 years ago and they still come back [to Marysville],” Terry said.

“There’s a history, people come back,” Sharen said.

“It’s lovely to have families where the kids think it’s their home.”

Sharen and Terry were busy making their own mark on their bed and breakfast businesses, however devastation struck in 2009 when both properties were razed to the ground in the Black Saturday bushfires.

Today, Dalrymples and Amelina stand proud once more.

Dalrymples reopened in 2012 and Amelina followed in 2013 thanks to Sharen and Terry’s fierce determination and love of their businesses,

home and community.

A builder by trade, Terry constructed the four new Dalrymples cottages along with their home and four cottages at Amelina. Not afraid to push the architectural boundaries, Sharen and Terry chose a freeform style for their home and cottages at Dalrymples.

This type of architecture is characterised by curved and flowing designs and irregular shapes.

“There are only two straight walls in the house,” Sharen said.

With no two beams or pieces of wood the same, the building process was ➤





challenging for Terry, and time consuming. But it was something he took in his stride and the end result is outstanding.

If you ever visit the Donovans or have the pleasure of being their guest you will instantly recognise Sharen's flair for interior design and attention to detail, which perfectly complements their choice of architectural style.

"I buy a cushion I love and build from there," Sharen said. "I love it."

Two of the cottages at Dalrymples are an

Australian-Japanese style fusion, making the spaces elegant and modern while embracing simplicity.

Vintage kimonos adorn the walls in these cottages alongside traditional Japanese works of art. The end product is exceptional.

The other cottages embrace modernity while remaining warm and relaxing with elements of country style and luxury everywhere.

It's hard to imagine seven years ago barely a tree or shrub remained on the Donovans' property. Today

their gardens are booming. Gum trees have shot up, brightly coloured flowers are in bloom; hazelnuts adorn their trees alongside figs and kiwi fruit. Birds and wildlife are thriving and make no secret of their presence, singing loudly for guests to hear.

"We love doing what we're doing, that's why it has worked," Sharen said.

"We're very passionate about it."

"It has to be a passion, you have to love doing what you're doing."

"We just want to do a good job and enjoy doing it," Terry said.

"And we're not the only people in town to do that."

Sharen and Terry might not have come to Marysville looking for a business all those years ago, but that is what they found, and that is what they have thrived on and flourished in. They have made their businesses their own and their success is reflected in returning guests, awards and most importantly in their happiness and passion to continue doing it.

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