

Upon arriving at the Country Road Motel in St Arnaud you know you're in for an afternoon of laughs. Meeting people like Neil and Chris is the reason why we produce these Focus on Business segments.

Most days Chris and Neil begin working at 5:30am and finish up around 10-11pm. As the owners of a 14-room motel they are responsible for an array of tasks. This never ending list of tasks range from cleaning and preparing the rooms for guests, completing the breakfast orders, doing all of the laundry, running the admin side of the business and most importantly being super nice to their guests. Which explains why the Country Road Motel has such a high amount of guests regularly visiting.

Before Neil and Chris embarked upon this business venture in 2014, they were both living in Deniliquin. Neil had a background in hospitality management and Chris was working within telecommunications and business industries. Ultimately they decided to take a leap of faith and move to St Arnaud. Both say it's the best decision they've ever made and obviously Neil is very pleased to no longer be doing bar work.

Transitioning from paid employment to self employment can be very daunting but the prospective benefits far outweigh the negatives in this situation. In the past four years they have managed to accomplish a lot. Of particular importance was purchasing new, comfy beds for all of the rooms. Owning a motel means they had to educate themselves in a variety of health, OHS and accommodation regulations to ensure they were compliant under all the relevant regulations. The biggest lesson they have learnt from operating in the accommodation industry was to fully investigate the issue before taking any action. A lesson that we can all apply to many aspects of our lives.

Chris and Neil think the reason they have been so busy lately is because of their good looks. Other contributing factors is that there are numerous big projects occurring in the community that have resulted in additional guests. These projects mean guests are also staying for longer, another benefit to the community. They have also noticed that a lot of their guests are also visiting the area to see the Silo Art Trail. But mainly their good looks.

Given their unique story of how they began operating in this industry, they've provided their own advice to those thinking of getting into the accommodation industry. Jokingly, they said to 'RUN!' Their real advice was to research, research, research. Do not take anyone's word of mouth and to go investigate for yourself. Stay at similar motels and of course stay at the motel you are looking at operating. Lastly, look at the location and see what businesses are doing in the area and importantly what projects are expected to happen as these can have a huge impact on the success or failure of your business.

Chris offers a unique point of difference to any motel you will stay at throughout Victoria. Because she has She has over 20 years of experience within family history and has a lot brick walls- and that's why she is so good looking. (Bangs head on the wall) She has led classes and is looking to do the same in St Arnaud if the interest is there. They often get guests that arrive in St Arnaud and are wanting to research their family history. This has often resulted in many hours spent with the guests, putting them onto the track to find as much information as possible. Chris is a firm believer that you need to know where you have come from to

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know where you are going. Neil and Chris love working in this industry as they often meet many wonderful people throughout the many short interactions they have everyday.

The accommodation industry has experienced considerable changes in the past decades. One major change is the addition of third party accommodation booking websites. In a bid for Australians to support small local accommodation businesses, Dick Smith has urged all Australians to book their accommodation directly with the accommodation provider, to ensure millions of dollars are not leaving our small country towns. Think about this next time you go to book a holiday.

In the future their main business goal is to make millions and millions of dollars, although they haven't yet figured out how to accomplish this. In reality, they plan to continue working extremely hard in the hope that they will not have to be relying on the age pension, something many within our society must rely on.

For those of you wanting to find out more about the Country Road Motel, you can get in contact with Neil and Chris via:

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