

BEDSHED TESTIMONIALS

Patrick & Gill Weiner Nunawading, VIC

In 1994 Patrick Weiner stepped off a plane from the UK with \$7 in his pocket. He and his wife Gill now own Bedshed's bedding franchise in Nunawading, suburban Melbourne.

The UK born and bred optimist spent five years working as a business manager in the UK's motor vehicle industry. He then backpacked for the best part of a year, picking grapes to fund his travels before returning briefly to the UK. Patrick's urge to reach Australian shores kicked in soon after and he spent two years a Business Manager in Melbourne followed by 10 years with Esanda as a national training consultant.

His wife Gill also arrived in Australia on a backpacking holiday and spent a decade in administration and managerial roles for an international telecommunications firm.

"The career-changing clincher came when I arrived home from one of many business trips and our daughter didn't recognise me," said Patrick.

After several years working for himself trading the markets, Patrick's passion for retailing kicked in again and they began investigating opportunities for their own retail business.

Of franchising, Patrick says they have a better chance of success with someone backing them up, as opposed to starting a business from scratch.

"This had nothing but huge appeal for us. We seriously considered two or three different options but didn't settle until we found a partner who believed in us as much as we believed in them."

Gill said Bedshed is a known brand, with proven systems and an experienced management team.

"Before signing we met with management and other franchisees. Other franchisees have a genuine desire to help you succeed as well. We're basing our warehousing model on what another franchisee has done and how they operate. Franchisees were very generous with their time and knowledge and this gave us a lot of confidence," she said.

Patrick and Gill opened their store in Nunawading in early August. During the pre-opening phase their contact with Bedshed was daily.

"The Bedshed team has assisted us with everything – lease negotiations, floor layout, operations, merchandising, staff interviews, marketing, financial matters, training, IT. They've held our hands from woe to go. It removes the scary element and gives us a great deal of confidence," said Patrick.

Laurence Arnell-Smith
Rockingham, WA

With no retailing experience under his belt, Laurence Arnell-Smith took on a Bedshed franchise with his wife seven years ago. He hasn't looked back.

After starting a family, the former electrician and chartered accountant abandoned his career and started out on a completely new path.

"I didn't want to stay on the corporate ladder so I decided to look around at a number of opportunities. I also wanted something my wife could be involved in," says Laurence.

"At the end of the day it needed to provide a good work/life balance while being rewarding, challenging and ultimately a business with a well-known brand and strong product backing."

Unfazed by his transition to retailing, Laurence was confident his drive and people skills would serve him well.

"From the start I also had access to Bedshed's supportive management team and a network of like-minded franchisees," he says.

Laurence runs his own show at Bedshed Rockingham in WA but also has an input into key business decisions as a member of Bedshed's Franchise Advisory Council.

"We discuss a whole range of business matters on a regular basis, from operational factors and customer feedback to promotional and advertising campaigns. I'm involved at a macro level, and on a micro level I decide how to manage and run my own store."

With a young family, Laurence also relishes the opportunity to easily balance work commitments and time with his wife and two children.

"It's a big plus. If I want a day off with the kids I can do that."

Laurence says the best advice for prospective franchisees is to get to know the people behind the brand.

"You've got to know that they are who they say they are. It's exciting times ahead for Bedshed and the future looks good. As a bulky goods retailer, we're largely insulated from the impact of online shopping and we also have a great opportunity to expand into other states too," he says.

Graham Gibson
Moorabbin, VIC

Not many people can claim more than 40 years' experience in their industry, but Graham Gibson can.

Having joined Bedshed's team of franchisees nine years ago, this retailing industry veteran is now at the helm of Bedshed's newly relocated store at Moorabbin in suburban Melbourne.

"Retailing is in my veins. My father was in the industry and I've followed in his footsteps," Graham says.

It's been just a few short months since Graham relocated his store from a freestanding site in nearby Cheltenham to a more appealing site in neighbouring Moorabbin.

"I opened Cheltenham almost a decade ago during Bedshed's initial period of expansion on the eastern seaboard. At the end of 2011, the store was in need of a refit and when we got wind of a more appealing new site available in Moorabbin, we jumped at the opportunity," he said.

"Our new location is part of a homemaker centre which benefits from greater foot traffic and customer conveniences including car parking," said Graham.

Graham says the relocation process was straightforward, largely due to the support of Bedshed's management team.

"Their expertise and support was flawless. We formulated a plan and worked together to make it happen. They managed negotiations with the landlord, coordinated the store's fit-out and oversaw suppliers."

"This support is one of the key benefits of running a franchise as opposed to an independent business. In six weeks we were open for business again, complete with Bedshed's Australian-first in-store retailing technology – technology we would not have had access to without the strength of the Bedshed company behind us.

"It's exciting to be the first to market with this new technology and improving our customers' shopping experience.

"There's never been a more exciting time to be involved because no other retailer has pushed the in-store ecommerce boundaries like Bedshed has," said Graham.

**Russell Fudge
O'Connor, WA**

The sighting of a Bedshed advertisement was life-changing for Russell Fudge.

"I saw the opportunity to become a Bedshed franchisee advertised and I had to know more. It appealed to my entrepreneurial nature," says Russell, who now owns and operates three Bedshed stores at Mandurah North, Cockburn and O'Connor in metropolitan WA along with a centralised warehouse.

"I also had an existing carpet sales business and was looking for a new opportunity to complement it," he says. "The strength of the Bedshed brand was a primary attraction, as well as its group buying power and the associated economies of scale."

It's been 14 years since Russell joined Bedshed's franchisee team and he hasn't looked back. With three stores under his belt, he works hard but also enjoys the flexibility of managing his own time.

"The hours are flexible and on a personal level, I can easily be somewhere that I need to be."

For Russell, part of the Bedshed appeal is the ability to be actively involved in the company's broader business decisions.

"I have been involved in representing Franchisees on the company's Merchandise Advisory Council, the team which decides what products end up of the shop floor, and have been involved in many annual overseas buying trips with other franchisees.

"It's the best of both worlds because you choose what level you want to be involved in the decision making process of the group. Some people buy a franchise because they don't want to make these kinds of decisions, but having a say in product sourcing and selection is a big plus for me," he says.

Russell believes multi-unit franchising, such as the network of three stores he operates, will be one of the biggest changes in the future of franchising.

"It's a highly cost effective way to manage and grow your business. Stock for my three franchised stores is held in a central warehouse, which is much more cost effective," says Russell. "It also means I can supply my customers with product faster than competitors and that is a major competitive advantage."

Don & Gretchen Bantock
Osborne Park, WA

"Oh my god, what has he done," Gretchen Bantock thought to herself 26 years ago after learning her husband Don had purchased a Bedshed franchise. "It was our investment, so I thought I'd better get in there and make it work," she said.

And make it work they did. Don and Gretchen Bantock's store at Osborne Park WA was among the first franchised Bedshed outlets to open and years on it remains highly successful.

Bedshed, which began selling waterbeds back in 1980, has today become one of Australia's largest specialist mattress, bedding and bedroom furniture retailers about to notch up its 30th anniversary in franchising.

Bedshed is a family affair for the Bantocks, with their son Don Jr heavily involved in Osborne Park before purchasing his own franchised store at Midland, also in WA, six years ago.

It's a labour of love for nearly 80 year old Don, who worked in the wool industry before joining the Bedshed franchising family.

His store now employs a team of 20, including Manager Brenda Ward who owned her own Bedshed franchise in Balcatta in the early 1980s for several years. With well over two decades' retailing success up Don's sleeve, what's the ingredient to his success?

"We employ quality staff, we apply common sense and we enjoy unwavering support, practical input and advice from Bedshed management. They've been in the franchising game for 30 years, it's a proven system, they know their stuff," says Don.

"We also deliver a standard of customer service others can't compete with – the golden rule of retailing is to treat our customers as we would wish to be treated."

Despite conditions within the current retail environment, Don and Gretchen say their industry isn't threatened by the rise in online consumer spending.

"We know customers do their homework online because they come in with such specific questions, but when it comes to purchasing they're in our store to see, touch and buy," Don said.

"We understand what our customers want and we're able to deliver that because we participate in Bedshed's overseas buying trips to meet suppliers, check on quality and have input into new products. We've been involved since the merchandising trips started years ago," he said.

"Starting up a franchised business is, like any new venture, a lot of work," says this veteran. "But if you look at the big picture, play as a team and keep your sense of humour, it all comes together."

Susie Ralph
Morayfield, QLD



Susie Ralph started her own Bedshed business at Morayfield (Queensland) six years ago and, with husband Ken by her side, hasn't looked back.

Her retail experience started at just age 14, helping her aunt in a clothing store during school holidays. Her early stint in retailing sparked her passion for the industry – she enjoyed offering advice and quickly gained confidence speaking to people.

Susie continued to develop her retail skills and experience, branching out to the furniture industry and later purchasing her own Bedshed store.

"The first six months were both exciting and tiring - we worked seven days straight to keep our costs down. We're now at a stage where we are able to gradually step away from the business," she said.

According to Susie, developing good relationships with those important to your business' success is essential.

"It's an important lesson I've learnt," she says. "We work hard at maintaining good relationships with our business associates. We've received plenty of advice from the most unexpected places and people, all of which has been invaluable in growing our business successfully," Susie said.

"The encouragement and support I received from Bedshed when I relocated my store 12 months ago made the process easy. It helped me focus on what's important in running my business - my customers.

"For customers, buying a bed is not a quick process. It's more than buying a bed. It's about getting a better night's sleep to improve your life. It's a satisfying business because at the end of the day that's what we're helping people do," said Susie.

**Katy Gennai,
Watergardens, VIC**

Not everyone loves coming to work every day. Small business owner, Katy Gennai, probably bucks the trend and thrives on the freedom of running her own Bedshed franchise in Melbourne's Watergardens.

The 43 year old purchased her Bedshed bedding franchise two years ago, and hasn't looked back.

"As a business owner, I'm extremely focussed on growing my business and that's how I spend most of my time. But I also enjoy the flexibility that comes with running my own show, which means I can juggle work and family without the challenges of answering to someone else or placing an added burden onto others," Katy says.

Katy knew what industry she wanted to buy into. Having worked in the retail bedding sector for more than 25 years, she knows the products, she's acutely aware of what customers want and she has a vision for how to shape and market her business.

"That's why Bedshed is such a good match for me," she says.

And, like any small business owner, she also wants to make money. Her research showed Bedshed to be more profitable than its competitors, and the opportunity to secure her long-term financial future was forefront.

"I did my homework and it really paid off. Bedshed has given me the freedom to do more of the things I enjoy. I can afford to live the lifestyle I love and I also have greater control over my work schedule."

Katy began her career with Capt'n Snooze at the age of 19 and spent some four years working in a Bedshed store before investing in her own.

"Bedshed has better buying power, an exceptional network that works together as a team and a very strong product selection," she says.

"It's very well directed with a strong management team – it knows where it's going. The company survived the GFC very well, and still achieved good figures despite that period of global downturn.

"Central office gives me the freedom to run my own business and I make my own decisions about what stock goes on the floor. It's the ideal combination of autonomy and centralised, practical support," she says.

"It's very much a two-way street, and franchisees have a strong voice when it comes to product selection," she says.

Katy is heavily involved in Bedshed's imports program and went on her first overseas buying trip in March. She's scheduled to take off again in September, helping to select products, establish relationships and build rapport with suppliers. It's also an opportunity to forge closer relationships with other Bedshed franchisees around the country.

Katy's entrepreneurial eyes are firmly fixed on the future, with thoughts of potentially opening a second franchise down the track.

“Bedshed is ripe for expansion and poised for even further growth,” she predicts.

**Ingrid Alexander,
Morley, WA**

That’s because Ingrid, together with her husband and two sons, owns a Bedshed bedding franchise in Morley, WA.

“Owning a franchise takes so much of the risk out of running your own business,” she says. “It’s a small business but with all the extras – a strong brand, national buying power, marketing handled at both a state and national level, and practical support and advice from an experienced management team who know what works,” she says.

Ingrid is hands-on, runs her own show and loves the flexibility of making her own decisions. And being her own boss, she also enjoys the freedom of choosing the hours she works.

Ingrid Alexander is her own boss, working her own hours and operating a true family business. She’s like a lot of small business owners except for one difference - she operates an enterprise which doesn’t carry the same risks as most small businesses.

Her partnership with Bedshed began more than a decade ago, after emigrating from England and purchasing a Bedshed store in Armadale, WA. Keen to run a larger store, she later purchased Morley which she ran for eight years.

Needing some time out of the workforce, Ingrid and her husband sold Morley in 2003 but remained involved with Bedshed. They soon missed the challenge and excitement of running a business, which led them to re-purchase the Morley store in 2008 and Ingrid is now in the process of opening her second store in Malaga. Ingrid hopes that when she and her husband eventually retire, their two sons will continue to run the business.

Ingrid enjoys the flexibility and autonomy to tailor floor stock to her local area, a factor she believes is critical to the success of her franchise.

“We are encouraged to participate in overseas buying trips, subsidised by the company, where we can contribute to decisions on stock purchases,” says Ingrid, who went on her first buying trip this year with 15 other franchisees.

“We networked, we met suppliers and we saw where the products are made. Together we compared different viewpoints on the product range and looked at what products worked in different locations,” she says. “It also meant I could see the wide range of products available and add to the selection I stock in my particular store.”

Business trips are not the only time Ingrid travels overseas. She often returns to England to visit friends and family.

“I am lucky to be in a position to take time off from work and also to be financially comfortable enough to travel overseas.”

According to Ingrid, Bedshed’s democratic approach to product selection and its purchasing methods differentiates it from other bedding franchises.

"We buy direct from suppliers, which cuts out the middle man so there's no wholesaler taking a percentage of the profit and our pricing is much more competitive," she says.

Ingrid says she knows many Bedshed franchisees who have done very well from their business.

"The rewards are there for those who work hard. Ultimately, you're the boss and the one in charge of making your own business profitable," she says.

Alan Franks
Mornington, VIC



Alan Franks considers himself a lucky business owner. Firstly, he makes money. And secondly, he gets to tap into the wisdom of his counterparts on a daily basis.

For the past six years Alan has owned and operated a Bedshed franchise in Mornington, Victoria in partnership with his son Elton.

At 62, Alan has a wealth of retailing experience, having worked for a large electrical retailer before making his way into the furniture and bedding sector. He is also a former owner of a stand-alone furniture business, which by his own admission, "was very hard going".

"As a stand-alone, you don't have the benefit of a well-known brand, you don't have the buying power you get as a franchisee and you certainly don't have access to national marketing support. But you get all of that with a Bedshed franchise, and that's why I came on board," he says.

With contacts in the bedding business, including some who owned their own Bedshed franchises, Alan was confident his Bedshed venture would be profitable.

"I've also been around long enough to know hard work is an essential ingredient to making money. I'm not an investor, but rather a very active and involved business owner," says Franks. "And I've found as long as we put in the effort, we certainly reap the reward."



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Franks says that while Bedshed appeared to be the new kid on the block, the company was clearly growing and that offered a good opportunity to get in on the ground floor.

"Being a nimble business, it also has the ability to make fast decisions and change direction quickly. The result is a much more effective and efficient business which meets franchisees' and our customers' needs," he says.

Bedshed's democratic structure also gives franchisees the opportunity to have their say, according to Franks.

The company's import program, for example, encourages franchisees to participate in overseas buying trips.

"We get to be part of the decision making, which is crucial when you're the one talking to customers about their needs on a daily basis," he says.

Alan and his franchisee counterparts also benefit from centralised marketing support and the ongoing advice and expertise of Bedshed's management team.

"They're always on hand to advise on store layouts and help us brainstorm ideas. I run my own show but good, practical help is always on tap," he says.

According to Alan, running the business in partnership with his son means he can balance work and lifestyle very effectively.

"I usually work a 40 hour week and I can take good chunks of time off when I want to," he says.

"It's a good partnership because Elton and I share the key attributes required to run a successful franchise. We have people skills and passion combined with a willingness and ability to learn and that's why I think we do so well."

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About Bedshed:

Bedshed is one of Australia's largest specialist bedding and bedroom furniture franchises with a network of more than 30 stores across the country. Bedshed has grown steadily since it started in Western Australia in 1980 and is currently expanding on the eastern seaboard.