

the New York Film Academy and made documentaries for a cancer foundation. I loved doing that; every story had a purpose.

My knee needed further surgery, however, and that's when my life suddenly went down the drain. My wife left me and a subsequent film expedition ended in disaster – sickness and all my money and equipment being stolen. My privileged supermodel existence was over. But who was left? I headed into the outback to discover the real Michael Butler.

It was incredibly grounding. After making a documentary about a master didgeridoo player, I was given a further commission with the Discovery Channel and then invited to film four guys circumnavigating Australia on jet skis – an effort that raised \$2 million for breast-cancer research.

I also met my partner, Samantha Martin. She's an Indigenous woman from a community of 500 people from Wyndham, in northern Western Australia. The moment I heard her voice on the phone, I knew she was 'the one'.

Now we travel the outback together making films that educate people on the positive side of Indigenous communities. We tell their stories for an SBS and NITV series, *Around the Campfire*, and have produced a book, *Bush Tukka Guide*, and series, *My Bush Tukka Adventures*, in which Samantha hunts and gathers the bush foods she ate as a child and cooks them with a modern twist.

I am a better person for being with her. Together we've touched many lives – but modelling was the launchpad for that. For more on Michael's documentaries, visit [sacredoz.com](http://sacredoz.com).



#### ELISE MAY, 38, MELBOURNE

I started modelling when I was 16. I grew up in the country, so it was fun to come to the city for castings. I was booked for shoots all over the world and I couldn't believe my luck in getting paid to travel. I also appeared regularly on *The Price is Right* and *Hey Hey It's Saturday*.

But along with these highs, there were difficulties. Beauty is in the eye of the client. Models get a lot of rejection and you need a certain personality to deal with that. I always had a high level of professionalism but became very down on myself. "What is my life about?" I wondered. "Where do I fit in?"

I realised I wasn't alone. Lots of people felt the same. I just needed to push through my fear, try my best and build a good support network. I came home and invested in a TV series about successful Australians. I interviewed everyone from Lindsay Fox to Steve Irwin, and after broadcasting their messages, I realised what I wanted to do: help others be their best.

Now I do that through my Our Children organisation. The idea is to enable anyone in the community to assist or mentor children in care or in difficult circumstances. That could be by giving them a lift to sports training or sponsoring them by buying their kit. It could be by helping with their reading or learning to drive, or by teaching them music or dance. It could be by offering work experience or simply taking a child out for an hour a week and providing a positive role model.

Sometimes all these kids need is a bit of fun. I've organised two beauty and pampering days for youngsters in care, for example. Some had never even been in a hair salon. The only boy at the day was so inspired, he's gone on to train to become a hairdresser!

It isn't difficult to make a child feel worthwhile and special. You just have to be willing to invest a little bit of time – and understand your best is enough. **AS TOLD TO BEVERLEY HADGRAFT** *Ourchildren.org.au* was set up with help from the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare. It will initially operate in Victoria.

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ADVERTISING FEATURE



Interior designer  
Caroline Choker

## NATURAL BEAUTY

### THIS INTERIOR DESIGNER TAKES A SIMPLE APPROACH TO DESIGN AND BEAUTY

Renowned for her work on Sydney's eating hotspot The Grounds of Alexandria, Caroline Choker lives and breathes design – which at times – can make life balance challenging.

"Design is an innate part of my being; creating experiential spaces that engage people is what I find most fulfilling. Consequently, I'm endlessly hunting for that elusive work/life balance. When you love what you do and are personally invested in your work, it can be difficult to switch off," she says.

Unlike some designers, Choker says she's not wedded to a design preference, preferring a simpler and more responsive approach.

"My design isn't based on style; it's a constantly evolving process that responds to a detailed analysis of the environment and the requirements of the client's brief. It is an opportunity for discovery and appreciation of holistic design solutions."

Her approach to her daily skincare is similarly simple, as she looks to smart products that enhance her natural beauty.

"My skin's pretty normal and my daily routine isn't overly fussy; I don't have time for much more than cleansing, exfoliating and moisturising. It used to be even simpler, but as I've gotten older I've added vitamin C in the morning and vitamin A in the evening."

"Clinique's Sonic System Purifying Cleansing Brush is great – the bristles really massage the face and it feels like it's cleansing my pores deeply," Choker says.

#### SMART, FAST AND CLEAN

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