

# I LOVE HIM, but I'm staying put

## THE OTHER HALF

by Jennifer Hansen

INTERVIEWS WITH THE PARTNERS  
OF SUCCESSFUL AUSTRALIANS



WHILE the football world holds its breath waiting for AFL's golden boy Gary Ablett to decide whether he'll move to the Gold Coast, his girlfriend of more than five years, Lauren Phillips, is happy for him to take his time.

The bubbly 23-year-old is busy making her own mark — as a TV presenter, ambassador for Myer and trying out her skills on breakfast radio.

But one thing is for sure. Even if Ablett does move up north, Lauren plans on staying firmly planted in Melbourne. Here, she talks about how they could survive the pressures of a long-distance romance and why she couldn't leave her beloved Melbourne

**J** You're doing a lot right now — TV, radio, ambassador for Myer, Spring Racing Carnival commitments. How do you find time to study as well?

**L** I am still studying at RMIT and have three subjects left, but I put them on hold and will pick them up next year. It's a Bachelor of Communications. I took a leave of absence because I'm so busy, I don't have time to do anything, let alone keep up with my studies. But I'm looking forward to finishing and it will be great to get my degree under my belt. At the moment I'm working at Myer, in an ambassador role. And for the last 12 months I've been the face of NF by Nicola Finetti (fashion label).

**J** When you started your degree, did you think your career would take off as quickly as it has?

**L** No! I didn't even know what I wanted to do when I finished school. I took a year off when I finished year 12 and then started studying. In my first year out of school I was asked by Channel Nine to do a general screen test, with a couple of hundred other people. And I thought, "Oh, OK, why not? I've got nothing to lose". I did it and then got asked to do my first story for *A Current Affair* on Brownlow fashion. It was just a one-off story and I was working in a shop at the time, and I thought, "Oh, it's a bit of fun and a bit of pocket money". Then that led to them asking me back to do spring racing and that led to a role at Channel Nine on *Postcards* and I still do fashion events for *A Current Affair*.

**J** How long have you been with *Postcards*?

**L** It's my third year on the show. I've got one show left for the year and then it wraps up. It's the best job. We get to go to beautiful places, restaurants, hotels and spas — do fun things and get to be ourselves.

**J** So you're combining presenting with modelling?

**L** I wouldn't say modelling. Absolutely, by no stretch of the

imagination, do I see myself as a model. When I signed with Myer, I felt like a fish out of water at my first photo shoot. I was terrified. I mean, I watch *Australia's Next Top Model* and that's my idea of modelling. So it was really stretching my comfort zone. I'm a speaker, not a poser really, in terms of what I do. I'd much prefer to be talking about something than modelling.

**J** You'd rather be known as something more than just a pretty face?

**L** That's right. Myer has put me in this role as a spokesperson. I've been doing a lot of their fashion launches, hosting with Jen Hawkins, and we've done these nationally. Last week we were in Perth and Sydney, and Adelaide before that, travelling around and launching their collections which has been fun. I love that! But the role with NF by Nicola Finetti is also to show girls that you don't have to be a model to wear a collection like this.

**J** But you have a great figure and could easily work as a model. What do you do to keep in shape?

**L** I have a darling personal trainer who puts up with my whingeing. Twice a week I see him, but if you ask him he would say I don't turn up twice a week. There are times when I just can't, when I'm away working. I do it with my five best friends and he's a very brave man who trains six girls at once. It's hilarious. It's my favourite hour of the week. I don't get much training done, but we get a lot of laughs.

**J** So with all these diverse aspects to your career, do you have a definitive career goal?

**L** No! (laughs)

**J** You must have some idea?

**L** I have no idea! I wasn't "heading" here and I wasn't "heading" into television. I was going to be working in communications. At the moment, there's so much happening, I'm just taking it all in my stride and taking as many opportunities as I can. I'm still only 23.

Paint it black  
Gary Ablett  
and Lauren  
Phillips on  
the blue  
carpet at  
this year's  
Brownlow  
Medal count.

Shaping up  
Phillips loves  
her busy  
life. Here  
she wears  
an NF by  
Nicola Finetti  
dress \$189,  
and Gregory  
Ladner  
headpiece  
\$99.95.

MAIN  
PICTURE  
MANUELA  
CIFRA



**J** How did your radio gig at FOX FM this week come about?

**L** I got a phone call last week, out of the blue ... asking if I'd ever thought about doing radio. I've always wanted to do radio. I think I heard Hamish and Andy once describe it as the most fun you can have sitting down, and after this week I tend to agree. The 4am starts have been a bit scary but I've got through it. Jo Stanley was having a few days off, so I was asked if I'd be interested in co-hosting with Matt Tilley and Troy, and it was brilliant. We had so much fun. We had good people to interview.

**J** I heard the on-air prank you played on Gary. That was hilarious. (Lauren pretended she'd been involved in a bingle and put Gary on the phone to speak with Matt Tilley, who was playing the role of an upset motorist.)

**L** Well, Hamish and Andy "got" me the day before and I told Gary and he was laughing, so it was payback for him laughing at me.

**J** How did you enjoy the Brownlow?

**L** It was great. This year was a bit different because for the last three years we've gone in with the boys in the Grand Final and the Brownlow has been the thing on the side they've had to do in Grand Final Week. And Gary went in as the favourite for three years in a row, and this year

the pressure wasn't on us. There was no pressure on him going in as the favourite. Well a little pressure as he was second favourite. But they got to let their hair down, have a few drinks and have a bit of fun.

**J** While there's pressure on him, surely there's also pressure on you with so much media focus on what outfits women are wearing?

**L** It is harsh. But I'm in a lucky position with a lot of people behind me who help me get there ... Lots of the girls have children and full-time jobs, or two jobs, or are studying as well and they don't have people throwing themselves at them to help. And I think people forget that. And they say, "Why has she got such a bad dress? Surely there are a million designers wanting to dress them". But the reality is there's not ... I don't understand then how people think it's their prerogative to cut them down. I'd like to see what they look like on the couch on that Monday night, watching the TV. It's very easy to criticise someone else, but until you walk in their shoes it's not fair.

**J** How do you cope with all the pressure at the moment, with Gary constantly being asked what his decision about the Gold Coast will be?

**L** I suppose Gary being such a high-profile footballer, everyone wants to know what he's doing and where