

PREPARING OUR MINI ADVENTURERS

Keeping children involved about what is happening at every stage of the migration journey has been key for **Karen Bleakley**



The boys hope to have a swimming pool in their garden in Australia

Mummy, can Zachary come to play when we move to Australia?" asked one of my four-year-old twins this week about their best friend.

"And will we still be able to see Nana and Faraway Grandma when we move?" They coined the nicknames Faraway Grandma and Grandad because my parents live five hours away compared with their local grandparents.

It's going to take on a whole new meaning when we're living on the other side of the world.

My heart melts every time I think about them not being able to cuddle their grandparents or play with their friends. Leaving family and friends behind is the most difficult part of the move.

I've tried to be open and honest with the kids about what is happening at every stage of the migration. They've taken everything in their strides so far. We've explained that somebody has bought our home so we'll be moving out, and they know we're selling lots of furniture as there isn't room in the big box for everything. We sold our playground



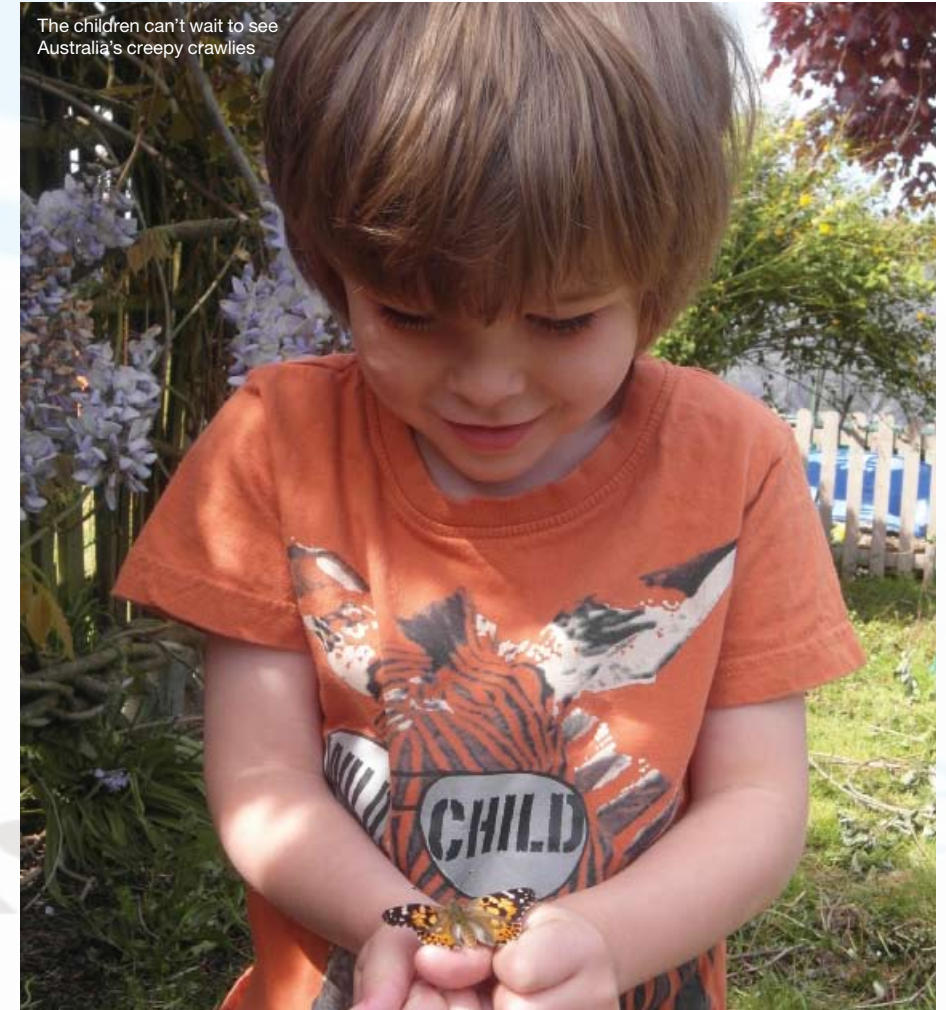
Karen has prepared her kids for the move

equipment recently and the new owners asked if they were sad to see it go. The boys smiled and excitedly told them they didn't mind as they were getting a swimming pool instead.

LOOKING FORWARD

As a child, my husband managed to get bitten by the only venomous snake in the UK, so it's no surprise that my sons have developed his wildlife obsession.

Bug hunting is their favourite activity, so we've spent hours reading nature



The children can't wait to see Australia's creepy crawlies

"LEAVING FAMILY AND FRIENDS BEHIND IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF THE MOVE"

encyclopaedias together to introduce them to Australia's creepy crawlies. I hope they've learnt enough to be more cautious about what they pick up when we land.

They're hoping to see koalas, kangaroos, dolphins, dingoes, turtles and, the most recent addition, whale sharks (after watching an episode of the *Octonauts*). It looks like we're going to have to plan quite a few trips to keep them happy! Not that I'm complaining, as we love wildlife spotting. It gives us an excuse to go back to Exmouth in WA and Fraser Island in Queensland, as well as to experience some of the fantastic wildlife parks the country has to offer.

The boys are looking forward to going on a plane again. Me? Not so much. The

last two-hour flight we took was easy as they slept through it as infants on our laps. This time we've got an extra toddler and the journey will be closer to 30 hours, if we're lucky.

We decided to fly straight through and go for short term pain rather than prolong the agony with a stopover. I'm hoping it will be easier than we're expecting. I've read every trick, from wrapping up new toys to unveil mid-flight to having a tablet loaded with programmes, games and songs, so I'm as prepared as I can be.

To help everyone settle in quickly, we're thinking of using a relocation company to find a rental and school. The last year has been exhausting, so having someone to help us settle in quickly when we land will

be a relief. We need to get some sense of normality back as soon as possible. I'm looking forward to finding a suburb that we love and getting settled in a rental until we can decide where to buy.

SPENDING TIME TOGETHER

When we arrive, we've promised to spend time exploring our new home as a family. After a busy year, we're looking forward to enjoying waterparks, wildlife reserves, beaches, picnics and parks with the kids. It's important for us to show them the best of the country so they can see why we've moved them across the world. Most of all, we're looking forward to introducing the kids to the country we fell in love with six years ago. 🇦🇺

■ Karen is a freelance travel writer and blogger. You can read about her migration journey on her family, travel and lifestyle blog at www.talesofatwinmum.com or on Twitter @TalesofaTwinMum.