

# FROM SURRENDER TO AVENGER

Chris's rise to stardom  
» Hit liftout



## KYLE MOVES NEXT DOOR TO IBRAHIM P29

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## An epic battle to remember

RARELY does the spectacle befit the occasion. Yesterday, though, in the annual Anzac Day clash, the Dragons and Roosters soared above all expectations. Before a record Anzac Day crowd of 40,164 fans at Allianz Stadium, the Dragons snatched a thriller 28-24 when Ben Creagh crashed over in the last minute.

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Picture: Phil Hillyard

## Exclusive: Ministers move out of plush offices

# BARRY'S TOWER PLAY

ANDREW CLENNELL  
STATE POLITICAL EDITOR

HIS ministers enjoy great city views — at a cost to taxpayers of \$18 million a year — but Premier Barry O'Farrell has cheaper offices in mind when the Governor Macquarie Tower lease ends.

Mr O'Farrell could even move his cabinet into their much smaller parliament house offices full-time.

Finance Minister Greg Pearce is looking at options to move ministers out of GMT once the government's lease expires in 2014.

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NATION AND WORLD REMEMBER ANZACS p4-5,18-19

# Sanctuary for body and mind



Absolute Sanctuary, a yoga and wellness retreat on Koh Samui.

**Go2**

## ABSOLUTE SANCTUARY, KOH SAMUI

### GET THERE

Getting there: Thai Airways International flies to Bangkok from Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth, with connections to Koh Samui. [thailairways.com.au](http://thailairways.com.au)

### STAY THERE

Absolute Sanctuary, 88 Moo 5, Cheongmon, Tambol Bophut, Amphur Koh Samui. [absolutesanctuary.com](http://absolutesanctuary.com)

### DO THERE

Absolute Sanctuary offers a variety of yoga, detox, wellness, fitness, weight and spa packages from a few days to a few weeks.

### MORE

[thailand.net.au](http://thailand.net.au)

## A DOSE OF DETOX PROVIDES A REMEDY TO THE MODERN WORLD

**BRIAR JENSEN**  
TRAVEL WRITER

My friends and I are headed to Absolute Sanctuary, reputedly Thailand's premier detox and yoga resort on Koh Samui, and I'm nervous.

As a wine-quaffing, meat-loving retreat novice with limited yoga experience (one lesson), I'm anxious about the alcohol-free vegetarian menu, worried about the taxing yoga routines and sceptical of what can be achieved in three days.

But feeling tired, rundown and carrying a couple of extra kilos after travelling elsewhere in Thailand, I'm determined to give it my best shot — after a frantic final tox-up on Singha beer, seafood and wine.

You get only one chance at a first impression and as we step into the open foyer of Absolute Sanctuary, the delicate scent of jasmine envelops us and I'm hooked. Call me fickle, but fragrance has a profound effect on my mood and I find jasmine sensual, soothing and uplifting — and it's also entirely

appropriate considering this is a wellness retreat.

We've booked the three-day holiday rejuvenation package, which includes a nutrition consultation, unlimited meditation and yoga classes — and, best of all, a daily massage and body wrap or facial.

The Moroccan-style resort is built on the side of a hill around a large turquoise infinity-edge pool.

The white-trimmed, mustard yellow accommodation wings are framed by dark green bush behind and bright green palms in front. Terracotta pots hold sculptural dracaena and trail white bougainvillea.

My ground-floor room is light and spacious, with full-length glass doors opening on to a small terrace with table and chair. Inside, the Moroccan theme continues with cool, polished concrete floors, lemon and ochre colour-washed walls and cobalt lamps in arched niches. Jasmine wafers from the oil burner.

Mosaic tiles and arched mirrors define the large bathroom with a deep, free-standing bath and jasmine-infused body products. I'm in olfactory heaven.

There is free wireless inter-

net and a small flat-screen TV, which I never turn on.

But no sheer curtains mean I can't have both privacy and daylight, and I miss an easy chair in which to read a book in airconditioned comfort.

I treat myself to a sleep-in the first morning, before a leisurely breakfast at 10am in the Love Kitchen. The name might be a tad kitsch, but the food and decor aren't.

Pink-edged curtains hang at the windows, a menagerie of glass lanterns dangle from the ceiling and dark timber tables and rattan-backed chairs exude an exotic Middle Eastern elegance. Leather tablemats and fresh flowers adorn the tables.

The menu includes seafood and chicken for those not detoxing, but I find the vegetarian options are more delicious and filling than I'd imagined. Salads, soups and mains pay homage to classic Thai and Moroccan dishes, and there's a choice of desserts.

I don't even miss my wine, replaced by delectable fresh juice blends with names like Happy Belly (pineapple, ginger and coriander) and Tropicana (papaya, banana and coconut).

I'm unsure what to expect from my nutrition session, but Australian wellness consultant Sara Canney puts me at ease and soon I'm confessing my dietary sins. She suggests remedies to relieve my tiredness and tendency to stack on

weight while travelling. I leave armed with information and good intentions.

The hardest challenge is choosing from the daily yoga program and spa menu, so I try to sample as many options as possible. Vinyasa, hatha and hot flow yoga are offered along with Pilates.

Morning meditation is a bit of a struggle — the pain from sitting cross-legged distracts me from breathing in one nostril and out the other. Walking slowly around the room in time to each breath is a blessed relief.

In yoga I progress past downward dog and baby pose to twisted dragon and sleeping swan, but always look forward to relaxing crocodile. Our teacher, Jana Braeur, is patient and inclusive, her velvet voice soothing and encouraging.

Sweat drips down my face and I wish I had more appropriate shorts, but after I copy the girl next to me and sit on a cushion, relieving the pain in feet and thighs, I start to enjoy the challenge and, surprisingly, don't feel sore afterwards.

A swim and laze by the pool is my reward.

I love my daily beauty treatments and massages. During a full-body coffee scrub, which smells good enough to drink, I'm rubbed and scrubbed in sweeping, circular, criss-crossing motions that flake away dry winter

skin. I look like I've been mud wrestling, but after a shower I am, in places, literally glowing.

However, I regret a last-minute decision to change my tropical fruit and vitamin body wrap (recommended for dry and ageing skin) to a Thai herbal wrap, as I don't realise the latter is a heat treatment.

After being lathered in aromatic mustard-looking paste and mummified in plastic, I'm cocooned in a weighty, heated, plastic blanket. Instead of melting away fatigue, it stews my mind.

Hallucinating, I try to call out but can't make a noise and have food on a fork but can't reach my mouth. It's seriously weird and I'm relieved to be unwrapped alive.

A rejuvenating facial restores my mental health with fragrant herbal extracts, hazelnut exfoliation, cleansing foam, hydrating mask and rose water mist. My face may not look any different, but it feels radiant.

During an aroma massage my masseuse glides her fleshy forearms silkily over my skin before digging her elbows into my shoulder blades, determined to knead out the knots. And I willingly succumb to the prodding, pulling and stretching of a traditional Thai massage behind white drapes in an open pavilion.

We're not confined to the resort and one evening we head to Lamai for some night shopping. Avoiding the restaurants and bars we shop for clothes we hope we'll soon fit into.

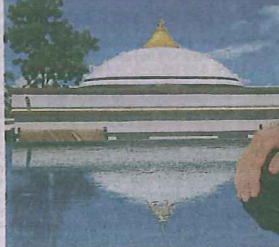
I forgo an afternoon yoga class for a visit to the huge golden Buddha and Wat Phra Yai (Temple of the Big Buddha) on tiny Koh Faan.

At Chaweng Beach I indulge in a foot exfoliation at Dr Fish. Tiny garra rufa fish nibble, or rather suck (they have no teeth), at my dead skin cells. It's ticklish and grown men beside me are giggling.

When it comes time to leave the resort I can understand why a previous guest, who'd booked for three days, stayed three weeks. I wish I could, too.

I'm impressed, as after only three days I feel lighter, fitter and less tired. And I'm determined to keep up the healthy routine at home (with the odd glass of wine thrown in).

The writer was a guest of the Tourism Authority of Thailand.



A massage kneads out the knots; a Moroccan-themed room; juice concoctions replace alcohol; the infinity-edge pool; yoga teacher Jana Braeur.