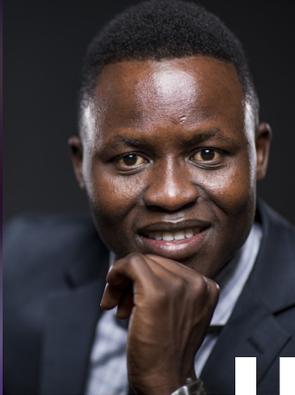


# INTHEBLACK

LEADERSHIP • STRATEGY • BUSINESS



## INSPIRING TALES FROM THE ACCOUNTING WORLD



*11 who make a difference*

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# INTRODUCTION

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## **INSPIRING TALES FROM THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION**

Accounting knowledge leads many practitioners into unexpected careers and inspires them to fight injustice and find new ways to serve their communities.

The following profiles come from the pages of INTHEBLACK. Each interviewee has faced up to unexpected events or taken a risk or course of action many others believed was foolhardy.

Several have turned their back on a comfortable life and all have used their accounting skills to provide opportunities and improve the lives of others.

Denis Yengi helps former South Sudanese refugees rebuild their lives, while Allan Lorraine, at the age of 90, took on bureaucracy to fight for the rights of aged-care home residents.

Read their inspiring insights here – and let their full stories unfold for you at [intheblack.com](http://intheblack.com)

4

**SUZANNE YOUNG**

Change agent at the National Rugby League

7

**DENIS YENGI**

From refugee to senior bureaucrat

11

**GENEVIEVE NG**

Expanding the horizons for mental health

15

**ALLAN LORRAINE**

Fight to right wrongs

19

**PATREA RYAN**

Helping Ebola victims in Africa

23

**ADAM MOONEY**

Advocate for fair and affordable finance

26

**AMANDA BURGESS**

Bringing CPA skills to disability services

30

**TAN CHIN HWEE**

Investing in care and compassion

33

**KIM COOGAN**

Taking accounting skills to developing countries

36

**CHRISTIAN LUGNAN**

Balancing the skills gap in Indigenous accountancy

40

**ZHANG KE**

Building ShineWing into a multinational firm

1



## SUZANNE YOUNG

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AND CHANGE AGENT AT THE  
NATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE

**“IF YOU’RE GOING TO DO SOMETHING,  
YOU DO IT AT 100 PER CENT.”**

**T**he National Rugby League (NRL) is breaking out of its boys' own culture and chief operating officer Suzanne Young is in the front row of the push.

Working for the NRL is not a job for the faint-hearted. Like a lot of football codes it's been a boys' club, at times tarnished by alcohol, sex and drugs scandals that have ruined playing careers and sent sponsors investing their money elsewhere.

But Suzanne Young CPA is far from intimidated and describes herself as a change agent.

“That’s what I love doing. I like working in a team where we can improve. When I look at roles, I look at: is this a company I can be proud to work for? Is it a boss that I can learn from and is it a role where I can make a significant difference?”

Her steely stare and strategic business brain have accompanied her on a journey through the finance corridors of Qantas and the Commonwealth Bank (CBA), then on to contractor Leighton Holdings, and now the rugby league.

Young is leading an organisation that is working hard to clean up parts of its image. The NRL takes a strong stand on mental health issues and domestic violence and she is working to ensure this work, as well as the mentoring of younger players and helping others transition to a post-playing career, are better known.

**“When I look at roles, I look at:  
is this a company I can be proud  
to work for?”**

Young is from a sports-loving family and was named Australian Surf Lifesaver of the Year in 1996. The resilience demanded by the rigours of that sport has prepared her for tough board meetings, players behaving badly and the ensuing battles with the media.

She credits joining North Bondi Surf Club for providing the opportunity to learn skills she has used in her career: being able to talk to everyone, from the barrister to the greenkeeper and learning how to socialise an idea – to sell the concept and improve it through diversity of thought.

“Getting input from others and allowing them to also own the idea, gives it a much greater chance of success.”

She acknowledges having encountered confronting behaviour at the NRL: “Having to stand my ground and say no. If we’re going to work together we need to be respectful. So ... that’s normal. It doesn’t just happen here. I’ve had that at CBA, I’ve had that at Qantas, Leighton’s.”

Young says a simple lesson her grandfather taught her as a child – “You have to be able to look yourself in the mirror every day” – has guided her through her 25-year career.

“What he was teaching me was that you know right from wrong and you have to deal with that. You have to know where the line is in the sand and that has held me in good stead. If I’ve had to fight for one of my staff in terms of protecting them or making sure they had a voice, I could do that because I knew I was doing the right thing.”

[THIS ARTICLE IS ADAPTED FROM THE MAY 2015 ISSUE OF INTHEBLACK. SUZANNE YOUNG HAS SINCE MOVED TO A NEW ROLE.](#)

2



## DENIS YENGI

FROM REFUGEE TO CPA

**“A DREAM IS A POWERFUL THING. ANYONE, RICH OR POOR, CAN AFFORD IT. THE LESSON OF MY STORY IS THAT ANYONE CAN REACH THEIR DREAMS. WHAT YOU NEED IS DETERMINATION, FOCUS AND PERSISTENCE.”**

**D**enis Yengi has faced struggles most of us couldn't begin to imagine. His happy childhood in South Sudan ended abruptly at age seven, when he and his family were forced to flee the country's brutal civil war. After crossing the border into northern Uganda on foot, they spent 13 long years in a UN refugee camp.

"You're in a big stretch of land and they say, 'Here is your tent, here is some food', and that's it," Yengi recalls. "You hope that the UN will bring food – but sometimes they don't. It was pretty terrible, especially as a child and young person."

Amid the deprivation and uncertainty of the camp, Yengi continued to dream of a better life. Inspired by a member of his church who counted their meagre offerings, Yengi decided he would work to become an accountant.

"I was fascinated by the respect that he got and the trust the church community had in him," he says.

While opportunities to complete his education were few, Yengi was fiercely determined. "I convinced a local high school principal to let me complete my year nine for free in exchange for cleaning the school," he says.

Still, his prospects looked bleak – until his family received a surprise visit from his uncle, Ben Yengi OAM, who had emigrated to South Australia in the 1970s and now hoped to sponsor them to join him in Adelaide. It took another five years, when Yengi was 20, before he and his family were finally able to make the move to Australia.

### **FROM POVERTY TO PROMENADES**

The tree-lined streets and stately homes of Adelaide were a shock after the poverty and disorder of the refugee camp.

“There were all these beautiful wide streets in the suburbs – but there was no one walking around!” laughs Yengi.

Uncle Ben rapidly became a major influence in Yengi’s life, with his impressive community work with the Indigenous Pitjantjatjara people and South Australia’s migrants leaving an indelible impression. Yengi enrolled at Marden Senior College in Adelaide to fill the gaps in his education.

“In Uganda, you really have to struggle to be able to go to school or study. But here, you are encouraged to learn. In year 12, I’d go to the library, then go home and study three hours more. And I was careful about who I made friends with so I didn’t get sidetracked.”

Yengi passed year 12 with an award for Outstanding Achievement in Education and was accepted into the Bachelor of Commerce degree at Flinders University.

“If you believe in it and persistently work towards it, even the horrific experience of war will never take your dream away.”

After graduating, Yengi resolved to work for the public sector as a way of expressing his gratitude for the opportunities Australia had given him. So he was overjoyed when he became a senior analyst in the South Australian Auditor-General’s Department.

**“If you believe in it and persistently work towards it, even the horrific experience of war will never take your dream away.”**

“Not that long ago, I’d been in a refugee camp – and now here I was, auditing the South Australian Industrial Relations Court and the Workers Compensation Tribunal,” says Yengi. “I couldn’t quite believe it.”

Other analyst and business management roles followed, as Yengi climbed the ranks of the public service. He continued to give back to the community after hours, helping South Sudanese refugees rebuild their lives. In 2014, his work as treasurer of the South Sudan Equatoria Communities Association of South Australia was recognised by an African-Australian Captains Award. But his proudest achievement came in 2015, when he received the CPA designation – realising an ambition nurtured since childhood.

“My future is now filled with possibilities. If you dare to dream of achieving something, it doesn’t matter how long it takes. If you believe in it and persistently work towards it, even the horrific experience of war will never take your dream away.”

While he doesn’t dwell on the pain of his past, Yengi will never forget where he came from. It’s part of the driving force in him to give back where he can.

“When I see women and kids in war-torn countries, it really hurts my heart,” he says. “No one should have to live in these conditions.”

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3

A photograph of Genevieve Ng, a woman with short black hair, wearing a bright pink Columbia jacket over a dark blue t-shirt. She is sitting on a stone ledge of the Great Wall of China, with lush green trees and a section of the wall visible in the background.

## GENEVIEVE NG

WHY MENTAL HEALTH CAN USE A CPA'S TOUCH

**“I AM A FIRM BELIEVER IN THE POWER OF EDUCATION FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD, AS WELL AS EARLY MEDICAL INTERVENTION AS A GAME CHANGER, TO BETTER EACH CHILD’S FUTURE IN THIS EXCITING WORLD.”**

**G**enevieve Ng CPA has a goal – to expand the horizons and opportunities for young people with mental health issues at Singapore’s Institute of Mental Health.

Ng isn’t shy about wanting to change people’s minds. She heads finance and development at GCoreLab in Singapore, which is researching cooling solutions for the storage batteries that will be crucial to future clean energy networks. She also volunteers to help people with mental health problems, which for a long time held a stigma in Singapore.

Ng began volunteering at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) in Singapore nine years ago, first in the adult wing and, from 2008, in the child and adolescent ward, the Sunrise Wing.

“We were invited to visit the adult psychiatric wards at IMH,” she recalls. “I was moved by what I saw and decided to enrol as a volunteer – nothing glamorous, simply good old-fashioned interaction and conversations with these adult patients to feel the world they have since lost touch with.”

She also completed the first crisis management course conducted by psychiatrists and psychologists at IMH. “I have always been fascinated by how the brain controls human functioning and decision-making behaviour during a crisis,” she explains.

As a volunteer on the Sunrise Wing, Ng engages youngsters with activities ranging from art and craft sessions to puzzle games. She helps further by sourcing sponsorships for the children for special events and treats.

“Going forward, we would like to explore affordable tuition and related rehabilitation therapy or enrichment coaching clinics for the

patients, and lessen the financial burden of their caregivers. We hope to help these patients secure paying jobs that match their unique abilities, to be financially independent and lead a meaningful life.”

Born in Singapore, Ng studied business administration at Curtin University and the University of Western Australia. She is a small shareholder in GCoreLab, which also has offices in China and California, and explains that since 2012 her role there has transitioned from being an employee to more an angel investor, who invests either funds or expertise in start-ups.

“This allows me to contribute meaningful first-mover initiatives to create next generation sustainable and affordable solutions to meet the changing needs of the world,” she says.

Her work schedule allows her the flexibility to explore medical device research and development commercialisation with the National University Hospital and its research partners.

Ng was brought up with the idea that you should always help your neighbour, and she aims to be “a value-adding global citizen”.

She sees promoting emotional wellness and resilience as just as important to society as technical advances.

“The sheer stigma of mental health issues in Singapore has largely deterred those who need medical intervention from getting

**“We hope to help these patients secure paying jobs ... to be financially independent and lead a meaningful life.”**

medical attention,” she says. This is changing, thanks to awareness campaigns, and Ng wants to help push that change, both generally and in individual people’s lives.

“I am a firm believer in the power of education from early childhood, as well as early medical intervention as a game changer, to better each child’s future in this exciting world.”

### **INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH**

Singapore’s Institute of Mental Health was established in 1928 and today has 2010 beds across 50 wards, as well as seven outpatient clinics. Its Sunrise Wing is the only psychiatric ward for children in Singapore. Other facilities include the Sunshine Wing, a 50-bed acute ward for psychiatric patients aged 65 and older.

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**“The sheer stigma of mental health issues in Singapore has largely deterred those who need medical intervention from getting medical attention.”**



## ALLAN LORRAINE

AT THE AGE OF 90, THIS FCPA FOUGHT TO RIGHT THE WRONGS OF A PROPRIETOR AND A BUREAUCRACY THAT DIDN'T SEEM TO CARE

**“I DECIDED I WASN'T GOING TO WEAR THIS, AND I WASN'T GOING TO LET IT GO.”**

In October 2009, Allan Lorraine CPA secured a place for himself and his wife at Mentone Gardens, a Supported Residential Service in Melbourne. Lorraine wasn't expecting the exploitation of Mentone Gardens residents he was soon to uncover.

In June 2013, the management of Mentone Gardens called a meeting. The 50 or so unsuspecting people who filled the residents' lounge were addressed by a voluntary administrator who announced the company was going into liquidation.

When Mentone Gardens, operated by Parklane Assets, was placed into liquidation, residents discovered their deposits and bonds had not been held in a trust, as they had been assured. They had lost all their money. In total, Parklane owed residents A\$4.5 million.

However, the proprietors of Mentone Gardens had chosen the wrong man to mess with. Qualified with the Federal Institute of Accountants in 1949 and a member of CPA Australia since 1975, Lorraine had spent more than 30 years in the public service, including time as an investigations officer with the Australian Taxation Office and as Chief of Investigations at the Industrial Relations Bureau in the early 1980s.

"I decided I wasn't going to wear this, and I wasn't going to let it go," says Lorraine. He formed a committee to represent the bondholders.

This is how a then 90-year-old Lorraine found himself spearheading arguably the most important investigation of his life – not just for his own sake, but for the many residents incapable of taking action.

## **INTO THE FIGHT**

Over the next 18 months, Lorraine formulated and directed his campaign out of a small room in the aged-care residence to which he and his wife had relocated.

“The approach I took was to always act professionally, stick to the principles and the job at hand and not let people blindsides you.”

Lorraine estimates he dedicated about 2000 hours to the case. He contacted the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), the Victoria Police Fraud Squad and local, state and federal politicians; he spoke to the liquidator; and held hundreds of conversations with nearly all the residents about the “bond scandal”.

In particular, Lorraine wanted answers from Victoria’s Department of Health. Mentone Gardens had to be registered with the department, which considers whether applicants are suitable and have the financial capacity to operate such a facility.

Lorraine believed the department had breached its duty of care and that the best approach was to request the state government pay the A\$4.5 million to the residents as an ex gratia (goodwill) payment in order to avoid facing a class action.

He received no response from the minister or premier. Three top law firms refused to take on the case, as they predicted a loss.

Then late in 2014, fortunes turned. The Victorian ombudsman, Deborah Glass, launched a formal investigation.

Glass’s investigation into the Health Department’s files on Mentone Gardens exposed “a litany of failings”. Her 2015 report noted that

**“The approach I took was to ... stick to the principles and the job at hand and not let people blindsides you.”**

Parklane had not provided proper financial records for the entire 25-year history of the company.

## **VICTORY**

When the ombudsman released her report, she recommended the state government make ex gratia payments to the people (or their estates) who had lost bonds, deposits or unspent fees paid in advance.

On the evening Glass announced her recommendations, Lorraine received a phone call at his home from the new minister for ageing, Martin Foley, telling him the former residents of Mentone Gardens would receive A\$4.33 million in payments.

In late 2015, the money was paid and, on 21 October 2016, Allan Lorraine was honoured by the governor with an Order of Australia medal for his service to the community, particularly to aged care. The letter recommending the award concluded: “His extraordinary and outstanding qualities include an Australian spirit, some might call it grit, in refusing to let go of an intrinsically unfair, unjust and illegal circumstance that no one wanted to hear about.”

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5

**PATREA RYAN**

HELPING EBOLA VICTIMS IN AFRICA

**“WHEN I SAW THE JOB  
ADVERT, I KNEW INSTANTLY  
I WANTED TO HELP.”**

**P**atrea Ryan CPA was no stranger to working in remote locations. As an international management accountant for the Australian Red Cross, she oversaw many international offices and aid programs. Yet this assignment was different. Ryan was about to join the many selfless people from across the world helping to control the deadly Ebola epidemic in West Africa.

For three months, from April 2015, Ryan worked as the finance and administration delegate at one of Red Cross's purpose-built Ebola centres in Sierra Leone.

“I was responsible for managing the financial side of the centre – overseeing the procurement team and organising all the cash transactions,” she says.

“Being a cash economy, I would meet a UN helicopter with our cash drops. At times, I looked after US\$30,000 – it would be piled up in my office like a giant four-foot Jenga game!”

Ryan set up financial and procurement procedures at the centre from scratch: “I worked every day for the first 30 days, until I introduced processes to enable me to take time off; it was exhausting,” she recalls.

With a “no touch” policy to reduce the risk of contamination, Ryan describes her Sierra Leone experience as “like living in a bubble”. Despite going to the local market or waving to the children as she drove through villages, she spent most of her time with the same handful of people – “at the centre and our hotel”.

The hotel was in a little village near the district of Kono, which was still bearing the scars of a war-torn country.

“Sometimes we had running water, and sometimes we had electricity. I ate a lot of rice and eggs!” she laughs.

At the centre, Ryan's office was isolated from the patients.

“To liaise with medical staff, I would enter the low-risk area, which involved wearing a full protective suit,” she says.

“The suits were very confronting. I can’t imagine how frightening it was for the patients.”

Ryan says she will never forget seeing the mass graves of the Ebola victims: “There were lines of graves simply marked with their names and ages – many children were lost.”

Against this backdrop of death and despair, Ryan was struck by the humanity of the local Red Cross staff.

“Many of them had family dying around them,” she says.

“They often faced the stigma of leaving their families and weren’t able to return to their villages for fear of contamination.”

The international staff’s dedication was relentless, too.

“One of the doctors was airlifted out in a bubble back to the UK due to a contamination risk,” says Ryan, “but a few months later she came back again.”

Despite the inherent challenges and risks, Ryan is planning to join more Red Cross missions. “I will be making sure we meet all the accounting and donor requirements,” she says.

Ryan credits her CPA grounding with giving her a strong background in governance and adaptability, “to ensure I can get my message

**“I worked every day for the first 30 days, until I introduced processes to enable me to take time off; it was exhausting.”**

across”. “It is great to pass on this valuable knowledge and increase people’s skills in overseas offices,” she adds.

“In return, I love learning about other cultures.”

## **FIGHTING EBOLA**

Since Ebola broke out in West Africa in early 2014, the Red Cross has played a central role in combating the epidemic. In Sierra Leone, 10,000 Red Cross staff and volunteers provided clinical care to 1240 patients – 698 survived. Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea were the hardest hit by the virus, with more than 26,000 cases recorded and more than 11,000 deaths.

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6



## ADAM MOONEY

A SATISFYING CAREER IN FAIR AND AFFORDABLE FINANCE

**“MAKE THE EFFORT TO IDENTIFY PEOPLE’S TALENTS AND ASPIRATIONS IN ORDER TO DRAW THE BEST OUT OF THEM. FOCUSING ON STRENGTHS RATHER THAN WEAKNESSES IS CRUCIAL, NOT JUST IN THE WORKPLACE BUT IN THE COMMUNITY OVERALL.”**

**G**ood Shepherd Microfinance provides affordable loans and savings accounts to some of Australia's most disadvantaged people. For chief executive officer Adam Mooney, there is tremendous satisfaction from using his finance skills to make a difference in society.

“I fell into accounting and then fell in love with it,” says Mooney.

As an 18-year-old in the mid-1980s, he started out as a mailroom sorter for the now defunct airline Ansett. When Ansett's finance department offered him the chance to do an accounting degree, he grabbed it. Over the next decade, he took on finance roles at Ansett and Merrill Lynch, before a long stint at ANZ where he held senior positions, including chief financial officer of the bank's biggest business unit.

Despite the intellectual stimulation, however, he was starting to feel restless. “I found myself wanting more,” recalls Mooney.

Then came what he calls his “epiphany”. During a hiatus from ANZ, from 2003 to 2005, he worked in Cambodia with the development agency Concern Worldwide, helping to set up what has become Cambodia's largest financially sustainable microfinance institution.

“I really had my eyes opened to the world of microfinance, sitting under a tree in a village and looking clients in the eye and seeing the

“To be part of something that doesn't judge a person's past but judges a person's commitment to their own future is very powerful ...”

dignity that results when you say, ‘Yes, I believe in your business plan. Here’s a loan for \$300 to buy this printing press or that fishing boat’.”

On returning to Australia, Mooney rejoined ANZ and became head of Community Development Finance while completing a Master of Social Science (International Development) at RMIT. He says the course steeled him to take a different career track. “I suppose that was my heartland – that was where I found myself,” he says.

Leadership roles at the Reconciliation Australia not-for-profit saw Mooney pursue his passion for building stronger relationships between the wider Australian community and Indigenous people.

For three years, he was director of the organisation’s Reconciliation Action Plans, and for a time he was acting CEO. Then in 2012, he landed his perfect job, becoming the inaugural CEO of Good Shepherd Microfinance.

The Good Shepherd organisation partners with about 250 groups across Australia to deliver fair and affordable finance to people excluded from mainstream bank loans and savings.

“It is the dream role for me,” says Mooney. “They are people who have dreams and aspirations that go unrequited or ignored. To be part of something that doesn’t judge a person’s past but judges a person’s commitment to their own future is very powerful and gives me great pleasure.”

Mooney urges today’s young workers to try a range of roles before settling on a career. “Eventually you’ll find out what you really like and where your passions are,” he says.

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# AMANDA BURGESS

BRINGING CPA SKILLS TO DISABILITY SERVICES

**“THE RESULTS ARE MORE TANGIBLE  
– OBSERVING THE DIFFERENCE THAT  
THE MANAGEMENT TEAMS MAKE  
TO CLIENTS’ LIVES.”**

Using her skills in a volunteer capacity has helped Amanda Burgess CPA develop her leadership skills. The satisfaction she derives from making a difference is another bonus.

Sometimes, giving back is about taking on an administrative challenge that would daunt all but the most dedicated volunteer.

For Burgess, volunteer director of the Carinya Society in Victoria, it was grappling with changes to disability services that will occur with the full introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Australia.

“Even the best and most committed management team in a not-for-profit environment often struggles to keep abreast of sector level changes and anticipation of trends,” says Burgess.

“In the absence of consultants and paid advisers, you are compelled to learn about topics that you would otherwise leave to a specialist.”

The mother of two says she joined Carinya in January 2014 because she was looking for a way to contribute more broadly to the community, and also wanted to develop herself as a young leader.

“I am part of a team of professionals who bring to the table financial, legal, medical and media experience,” she explains, “and I have been fortunate to have the guidance of John Hoffman CPA, the treasurer of Carinya Society, as a mentor.”

Burgess has built some costing models that will allow the society to see if it can run the organisation more efficiently without compromising the services it offers.

“For the day program, for example, we have implemented a model that helps to maximise staff-to-client ratios while containing outlay,” says Burgess. “There has also been a focus on managing the transition from ‘payment in advance’ to ‘payment in arrears’, another

significant change. Ensuring sufficient cash flow and systems to manage the transition has been a priority.”

Burgess’s paid job is at utility Melbourne Water, where she is responsible for capital program framework agreements, residual program alliance agreements and potentially other capital panel agreements (a total value of about A\$1 billion over five years).

A CPA for 13 years, she says that while her role at Melbourne Water is rewarding, she really appreciates her charity work, as it gives her the opportunity to use her skills and knowledge in a different way.

“The results are more tangible [at Carinya] – observing the difference that the management teams make to the clients’ lives via programs, infrastructure and support,” she says.

Burgess believes it’s important to demonstrate to her children a generosity of spirit, even if balancing professional and personal commitments isn’t always easy.

“But before and after the long working day, hugs, homework and bedtime stories are still all priorities,” she says emphatically.

### CARINYA SOCIETY

Carinya Society began in 1952, aiming to provide disabled children with a better existence and a chance to reach their full potential.

“In the absence of ... paid advisers, you are compelled to learn about topics that you would otherwise leave to a specialist.”

Today, it provides adult training and support services to advance the independence, dignity and human rights of people with disabilities.

As well as the chance to take part in many community-based activities, from photography to a motor club, Carinya's clients can spend time volunteering in North Melbourne's Lost Dogs Home or take part in a catering program that teaches them food-handling skills.

The Carinya centre, in Melbourne's Coburg, includes a sensory garden that is filled with colour, sound, smells and tastes, thanks to its herbs, vegetables and fruit trees (the produce is used in the society's cooking program). Carinya also provides permanent accommodation for five residents at Nelson House, as well as offering respite care.

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8

## TAN CHIN HWEE

INVESTING IN CARE AND COMPASSION

**“KYLIE’S BIRTH HAS TAUGHT US WHAT LIFE IS REALLY ABOUT.”**

The premature birth of his daughter changed the focus and mindset of savvy finance professional Tan Chin Hwee CPA. When Tan's eldest daughter Kylie was born at just 27 weeks and weighing a mere 800 grams, she was so fragile she struggled to cry.

Watching their tiny daughter battle to survive was a life-changing experience for the CPA, a then high-flying finance professional in Singapore, and his wife, Michelle.

As the founding partner of the Asian arm of US\$162 billion hedge fund Apollo Global Management, Tan had spent more than a decade immersed in his work and the constant demands of the investment world. Now he was faced with a challenge of a very different kind.

“It was a worrisome time, as we would go to visit our daughter who was fighting for her life,” says Tan, now the Asia-Pacific chief executive of commodities giant Trafigura Group.

“On the other hand, it was a timely reminder that, as the financial markets collapsed around us during the global financial crisis, life is larger. Kylie's birth has taught us what life is really about.”

Despite the danger their daughter was in, the Tans were lucky in one respect – money wasn't a concern. But they saw other families left with huge hospital bills they could not pay.

After a career of investing funds for clients, the father of three began investing in a new asset class: the next generation. In 2009, the Tans set up the “Premmies Fund” for the KK Women's and Children's Hospital, which is home to the largest neonatal intensive care unit in Singapore.

Every year, up to 30 of the families who have premature babies at the hospital struggle to pay the S\$15,000-plus cost of keeping their vulnerable children in specialist care for many months. The

Premmies Fund helps to cover in-hospital expenses, as well as the cost of special formula milk, breast pumps for mothers and a host of equipment and ancillary needs.

Tan's social conscience evolved from his own modest upbringing. His father was a self-taught journalist and scriptwriter, who worked several jobs to support his family and placed a high value on his three children's education. His mother left her job in a bookshop to raise her family and encouraged her children to follow their passions.

Tan excelled academically and won three scholarships to support his undergraduate accounting degree in Singapore and, later, his MBA from Yale University.

He has written a bestselling book, *Asian Financial Statement Analysis: Detecting Financial Irregularities*, and has won numerous accolades. These include being named as a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader in 2010; selected by *The Hedge Fund Journal* as one of the top 40 emerging absolute-return investors globally; and singled out as the Best Asia Credit Hedge Fund Manager by Hong Kong-based publication *The Asset*.

In recent years, the keen triathlete and marathon runner has devoted a portion of his time to teaching and mentoring young professionals and doing pro bono advisory work for regulators to help level the private-public playing field. He also sits on a number of panels and boards.

Today, eight-year-old Kylie Tan is a picture of health, and last year she was invited to sing at the launch of a fundraising book for the hospital that helped her survive her precarious start to life.

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# KIM COOGAN

HAVE ACCOUNTING SKILLS, WILL TRAVEL

**“YOU FELT AS IF YOU REALLY  
COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE.”**

Using her accounting and finance skills as a volunteer in a developing country ticked all the boxes for Kim Coogan CPA. “I love travel and had this idea that I’d like to live and work in another country. And it seemed if you were going to do that, it would be good to use the skills and experience you have in that capacity,” she says. “You can’t help but be grateful for the fact that, by accident of birth, you’re born in Australia rather than some of these other countries – how different your life would be.”

Coogan has travelled to Cambodia three times, twice as a volunteer and most recently on a paid venture.

Her first volunteer posting to the country came in 2013 with Accounting for International Development (AfID), an organisation which believes that skilled volunteering is a socially responsible and cost-effective way for accountants to build their skills while allowing community groups in developing countries to access a vast pool of talent.

For three weeks, Coogan worked at a school that taught traditional music and dance to children. She helped implement controls around cash flow and budgeting, and she mentored a young local bookkeeper.

“You felt as if you really could make a difference,” she says. “Something we would regard as small improvements, like helping someone with a spreadsheet, they just don’t always have the resources to otherwise have that knowledge.”

On her second visit, Coogan did a three-month maternity cover at Epic Arts, a performance arts provider that helps the disabled.

The strong sense of community and the warmth of the Cambodian people made an instant and lasting impression on Coogan, and she

accepted a year's paid contract to work for Epic Arts as an adviser, dealing with the organisation's international stakeholders and donors, and supporting its bid to build a local management team.

The timing was perfect. In 2014, Coogan took a redundancy from the Tasmanian Government's Retirement Benefits Fund in Hobart, after 12 years working there in financial analysis and reporting.

"My financial background is obviously going to be a huge asset, and when I was there I didn't really get the chance to do some of the training I would have liked, so that's something else that will be part of the job," she says. "I haven't actually retired, so feel that I'll come back from this with a whole new set of skills."

### **ACCOUNTING FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (AFID)**

AfID coordinates volunteering opportunities for accountants on projects in Africa, Asia and South America, lasting two weeks to 12 months. Projects can be tailored to match individual skills and circumstances.

### **EPIC ARTS**

Epic Arts Cambodia was set up in 2003 after a series of successful projects in China. Its message is that every person, regardless of ability or disability, should be valued, accepted and respected. It teaches this message by involving those with a disability in art and performance to promote expression and empowerment for the disabled and to educate those who are not. The organisation runs workshops, training programs and holds performances.

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10

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## CHRISTIAN LUGNAN

BALANCING THE DEFICIT OF INDIGENOUS ACCOUNTANTS

**“IF YOU HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE,  
PEOPLE SIT UP AND LISTEN.”**

**F**or Christian Lugnan CPA, a Gumbaynggirr man from the Coffs Harbour region of New South Wales, a talent for mathematics was the starting point for a career in accountancy. However, it was the BMW parked outside his mother's workplace one day that really ignited the then 12-year-old's passion for the finance field.

“At the time, I was keen on BMWs, and the accountant drove a BMW – hence to get the BMW, I had to become an accountant,” he explains. “I didn't get the BMW, however – my first car was a Volkswagen.”

What Lugnan did obtain was the ability to help Indigenous Australians have a real conversation about money. As a regional manager for the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC), he sees these conversations as an important part of his role.

“It's OK to talk about home ownership, budgeting or leaving your family a legacy,” he says.

Lugnan currently works with more than 300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations in south-east Queensland and north-east New South Wales. One of his main areas of focus is corporate governance and ensuring that these groups comply with their corporation's rule books and the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006.

“We are essentially the Indigenous version of ASIC,” he explains. Of his childhood, Lugnan says: “Certainly, I copped a lot of discrimination growing up. I was very shy and timid; I never wanted to stand out.

“Through education, though, I found my place and voice, especially at university as I met many other young, bright Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were similar to me. I went from strength to strength from there.”

Lugnan started a Bachelor of Business with an accounting major at the University of Technology, Sydney, then transferred to Southern Cross University, in Lismore, in northern New South Wales, where he completed his degree in 1997.

“Accounting was a very foreign thing for an Aboriginal student to be doing in the early 1990s – I was a bit of an oddity,” he recalls.

“Obviously, a lot more still needs to be done to attract Indigenous students. Thirty Indigenous accountants out of 200,000 is absolutely ludicrous.”

As a student, Lugnan says he was fortunate to gain a cadetship with Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL), “whereby I studied during the semesters and then worked for AHL in Sydney or their national office in Canberra”.

After a few years of working full-time with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission as an internal auditor, he began the CPA Program in 2001, with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship.

“Having an accounting background and qualification has provided me with many opportunities in the accounting field, but also in other aspects of my life,” says Lugnan. “If you have accounting

**“A lot more still needs to be done to attract Indigenous students. Thirty Indigenous accountants out of 200,000 is absolutely ludicrous.”**

skills, it enables you to steer your own, your family's and your community's destiny.”

### **INDIGENOUS ACCOUNTANTS AUSTRALIA (IAA)**

IAA is a joint initiative of CPA Australia and Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand that seeks to show the way to greater opportunities for Indigenous people to become accountants and thereby participate in and control financial governance and decision-making.

IAA's website, YouTube videos and social media channels are promoting further study and careers in accounting for Indigenous people. IAA is ramping up engagement with Indigenous students through Indigenous centres at universities and business schools, and its events are connecting Indigenous university students and graduates with employers.

A mentoring program to be offered under the IAA initiative is in development. In addition, five scholarships are offered each year by CPA Australia for Indigenous graduates of accounting.

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SHINewing AUSTRALIA  
MANAGING PARTNER MARCO  
CARLEI (AT LEFT) WITH ZHANG KE.

## ZHANG KE

AIMING TO MAKE SHINewing CHINA'S FIRST GREAT MULTINATIONAL  
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FIRM

**“I READ HISTORY AND  
PHILOSOPHY BOOKS. THIS  
HELPED ME A LOT.”**

The year 1999 was a rich one for multinational accounting firms in China. For PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the future seemed particularly bright, and the managing partner of Coopers' Chinese affiliate, Zhang Ke, was regarded as a Chinese accounting wunderkind.

Industry insiders saw Zhang as the heir apparent for the top job. But Zhang had a different future in view – one where local Chinese firms dominated the auditing and accounting profession in China. He handed in his resignation and formed ShineWing.

ShineWing is a strong Chinese brand boasting more than 4000 clients with close to 4500 employees and 200 partners. It also operates in Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong and Australia.

There has been a slew of partnership offers, but Zhang isn't interested. He wants to build his own international network.

Zhang's determination to build an independent Chinese firm with an international reach is as unorthodox as his professional background and experience. He has no formal training in accounting, and only graduated from university at the age of 29.

Born in Xi'an in 1953, Zhang grew up in a very different China. Like many urban teenagers during the Cultural Revolution, he was forcibly sent to work in the countryside when he was 16. A member of what is now referred to as the "lost generation", Zhang ended up on a farm in north-western China.

"There was no chance to study [formally] at all," he says. "I experienced many times of desperation and hope, hope and desperation."

As he developed the foundations of what grew into a strategic way of thinking, his teachers were Plato, Hegel, Kant and their Chinese counterparts Confucius, Lao-Tzu and Han Fei. "I think this helped

me a lot with my later achievements, more than learning accounting,” he says.

## ACCOUNTING RESURRECTED

In 1977, when universities reopened, Zhang studied “investment” at Renmin University. As a young graduate, he scored a job as a management consultant with Chinese state-owned investment company CITIC. Then in 1981, as China began opening itself to trade and investment, accounting in China was revived.

Zhang was transferred to the new accounting branch in CITIC. “It was not my choice,” he says. Everything he knows about accounting and auditing, he learnt on the job.

In 1993, with only 30 staff, Zhang was given the task of setting up CLEC, a joint venture between CITIC and Coopers & Lybrand. By the time Coopers merged with Price Waterhouse in 1999, he had developed Coopers into “the biggest firm in China, among the big six at that time”.

But while Zhang says the experience was later invaluable in establishing ShineWing, some of the lessons learned were not to his liking. He says the joint venture would have done better without

“There was no chance to study [formally] at all. I experienced many times of desperation and hope, hope and desperation.”

constant interference from foreign management. The rotation cycle of foreign employees also frustrated him.

By 1999, with the PwC merger finalised, he'd had enough. Zhang set up ShineWing with 60 employees from Coopers & Lybrand. The banks wouldn't touch him at first; his start-up funding consisted of his personal savings and money borrowed from friends. With only six clients to begin with, the money soon ran out. He borrowed more, survived, and eventually thrived.

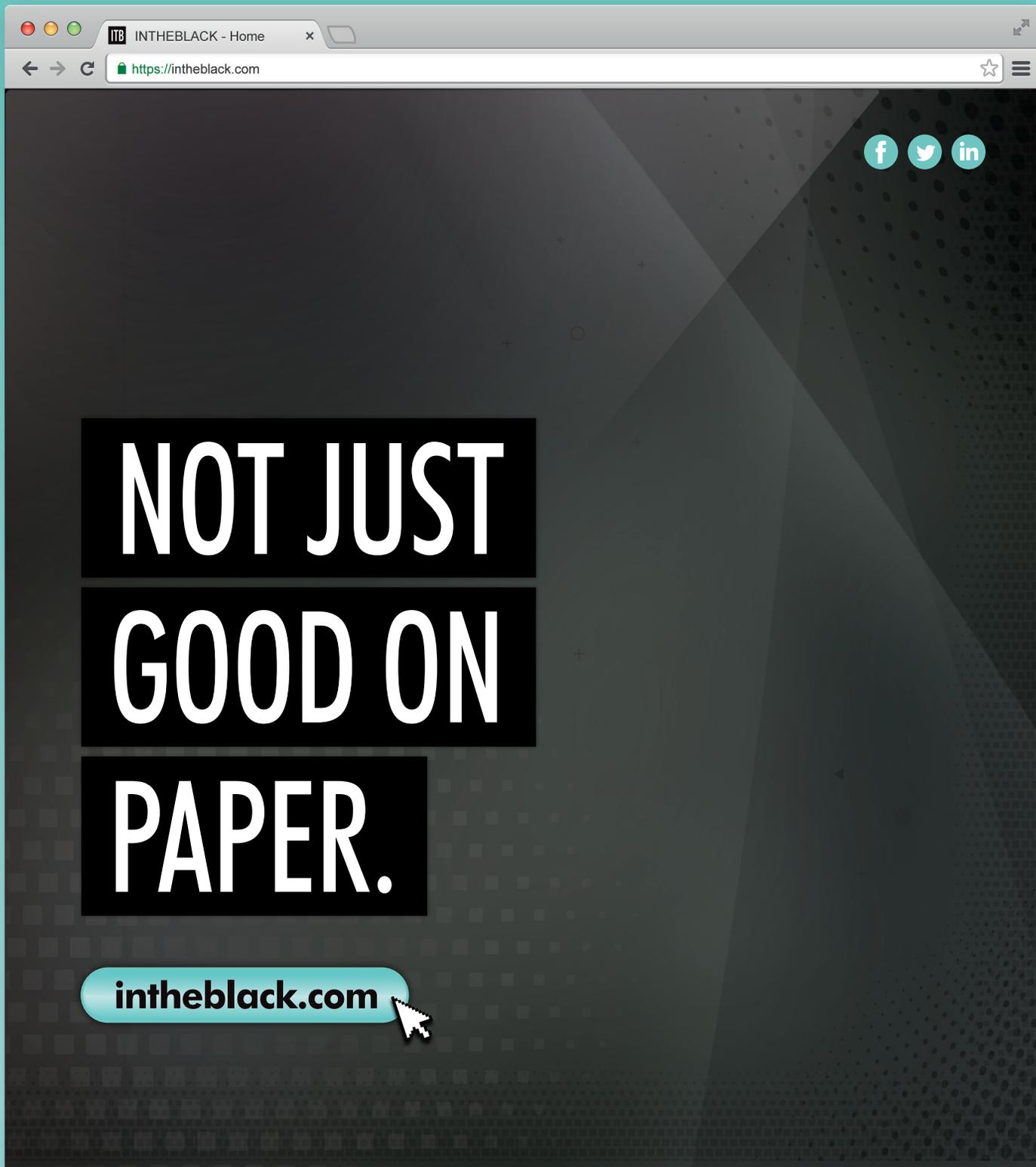
### THE TRANSFORMATION AHEAD

Zhang puts ShineWing's survival and success down to hitching his fortunes to the Chinese domestic market and an intimate understanding of his clients' needs. "We understand the Chinese economic environment and Chinese enterprises," he says.

As the overseas expansion of ShineWing has made clear, China was never going to be enough for Zhang.

"Our aim now is to build ShineWing into an international brand and an international second-tier firm," he says. "I will leave the bigger goal to my successors."

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