



# Australian Couple Ventures *into Aquaponics*

*By Geoff Wilson*

After only a few years of operation, aquaponics equipment maker, **Murray Hallam** and his wife, **Gail Hallam**, have made a substantial impact on Australia's rapidly-expanding home-based aquaponics market.

The supply of Yandina's three demonstration-education units (see story on page 28) is testimony enough to their local success with home-owners wanting greater home food supply and high schools wanting better science education – particularly for the final year's kids going on to university.

Their company name is Team Economics Pty Ltd, trading as Practical Aquaponics.

They are based at Maclean North, just south of Brisbane, in sub-tropical Queensland, where Australia's aquaponics technology has the relative advantage of excellent temperatures for fish, vegetables and fruit for most of the year.

Brisbane and its immediate region have annual day temperatures closer to 25 degrees Celsius (77 F) than most other cities, and night temperatures that rarely go lower than 10 degrees C (50 F).

This simple approach to aquaponics design has given Murray and Gail an audience for home-based aquaponics of several thousand people who buy their informational CDs and DVDs and their aquaponics equipment made from fiberglass.

Costs vary from A\$1,000 to \$2,000 for a basic unit for family unit on a balcony, back verandah or back shed. These units can provide at least 50% of a family's fresh fish, vegetables and fruit if the home grower becomes sufficiently skilled – and perhaps also buys extensions of the pebble troughs used for plant growing.

Murray and Gail are suppliers in Queensland and northern New South Wales, but their emailing list of several thousand now covers most of Australia.

Like a number of aquaponics equipment-making investors, this Australian couple had a background in boat-building.

But they report a significant difference in their customer base. Whereas a boat customer tended to only phone with a complaint, their aquaponic growers generally only file grateful appreciations. Perhaps that is because fiberglass aquaponics units are not tossed about on rough waters and damaging reefs.

Currently the Hallam couple have two basic units for home growers and schools. One is the **"Balcony Complete Kit"** and the other is the **"Patio Duo Aquaponics Kit."** Other commercial units are being considered, and will no doubt emerge.

Another kit they market is based on two, second-hand bathtubs. It is a demonstration unit for places like the Yandina aquaponics education shed – to

show people what they can do themselves with minimum effort and little cost.

Murray smiles when he mentions these bath-tub displays. He reports that he tends to get the \$1,000 to \$2,000 sales—even if people take on the do-it-yourself concept at first. They see so much more value in the bigger units that work most efficiently and provide the higher amount of inexpensive, healthy fresh fish, vegetables or fruit.

Murray and Gail broke into aquaponics equipment-making the same way as I’ve seen other successful growers or manufacturers – by accident.

Their hobby aquaponics brought requests for something similar from friends and relatives. A steady business is now developing into a strong one with representatives in other Queensland regions and in other States of Australia.

Murray says that his fish-raising knowledge came from his work in Papua New Guinea before he retired.

But he also has, next to his home and business, an impressive aquaponics demonstration that has two very good purposes – to show customers what they can well do themselves, and to provide Murray and Gail and family with healthy fresh



**Top:** Murray Hallam (left) with his wife and business partner, Gail Hallam (right), with strategic education co-ordinator for Aquaponics Network Australia, Sharmila Nezovic.



**Left:** Murray Hallam is proud of his water-grown, aquaponic fruit and vegetables. He is pictured next to a papaya that has been producing higher volumes of fresh fruit than soil-planted papayas.

produce without too much cost. It is commendable “post-retirement business development” that is going to help change the way we grow our fresh food, now that transport costs for distant fresh foods are likely to rise upward more rapidly.

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