

I started in the industry when I was 18 and had just left high school, so that's been 36 and a bit years.

I started out on *Wombat* as a camera assistant learning off some really great people.

*Wombat* was all about bringing interesting things from around the world to Australian children, so it was a great job.

One day we were sitting around a waterhole in Africa and there was this stand off between a herd of elephants and a crocodile.

The crocodile wanted to bask where the elephants were drinking, but they kept sucking up water and squirting it at him until he eventually moved on.

I moved along the ranks at *Wombat* until the show died. I suppose nothing can last forever.

They wanted me to do news and current affairs for Channel 7, but that wasn't the direction I wanted to go.

So I went freelance and had to work my way up again from an assistant to the director of photography.

There have been so many career highlights but among them has to be working with my director of photography idols Don McAlpine on *Peter Pan* and Darius Khondji on *The Ruins*.

During the first part of my career I did put my family first, so I often chose to work close to home if I could. I'd go to Melbourne to shoot *The Saddle Club* instead of going overseas.

My daughter Shayler is 24 now and my son Sam is 20.

Their mum Rachel was really understanding and helpful with the juggle and my current wife Fiona is the same.

It was really hard, but fortunately my children loved coming on set with me and hanging out with dad.

I found I was a dad in these intense bursts of time. I'd be working long hours, leaving before they got up and back after they went to bed, but then there'd be a few months between projects where I was home all the time.

It was great when the Gold Coast started attracting international attention and Hollywood started coming to us rather than me going to them.



## REAL PEOPLE OF THE GC

# ANDREW CONDER

AS TOLD TO EMILY MACDONALD

CAMERA OPERATOR ANDREW CONDER  
GIVES A RARE GLIMPSE INTO WHAT IT'S LIKE  
ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LENS

Big productions I've worked on recently include *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *The Shallows*. At first the set for my current job on *Bureau of Magical Things* was going to be moved to Brisbane and I was dreading the MI, so it's fantastic it's filming in Arundel where I live.

*Bureau of Magical Things* is very similar to working on any of the other Johnathan M. Shiff productions I've worked on like *Mako* and *H2O: Just Add Water*.

He gets the same good people working around him and it's like coming home to family.

This time instead of mermaids it has more of

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a city feel and is less about water as it's focused on fairies and elves, so I'm trying to give it a slightly different undertone.

The Gold Coast is the perfect place for any production to shoot in. Just look at the weather – we haven't had one bad day.

The Gold Coast City Council is also really happy to help out filmmakers – I've found them quite easy to work with.

We have such a diverse range of locations from the beach to the mountains in such a contained area, so it's not like you need to be sending crews out everywhere.

My biggest advice to aspiring camera operators is don't try to go too big too early.

Take the time to learn from people who have been in the industry a long time.

It's not just about getting the right shots, it's about being able to do so time after time under extreme pressure and during long hours.

There'll be times when you'll be working harder than you could imagine and times when there's no work around. That's the time a lot of people choose to leave. It's why you've got to have passion for the industry.



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