



January began in the Blue Mountains. Our just-walking Lucy was already showing her determined little personality, and Chloe continued to amaze me with how (relatively) grown up she could be.

Our year has been full of pretty standard family life. Alongside work & daycare there have been trips to the beach, the lake, the river, Mini Q, Cockington Green, Old Parliament House, the zoo, Blueberries dance class, cafes that do good chips, and endless playgrounds, with the kids' ever-growing circle of friends. Oh, how I hope those friends will still be such good friends as they continue to grow. For the adults there has been dancing, football, dessert nights, evening walks, and plenty of gaming and reviewing. There's occasional down-time in there, somewhere. If you squint really hard.

A few highlights that stand out:

In February, Pete went up to Sydney for the Guns 'n' Roses concert.

In March, we headed across the country to spend a week at Grandma's house in Augusta, introduce the kids to the A-W side of the family and enjoy the beautiful part of the world that is the Margaret River-Augusta region.

In July, a new job for Pete. A new team, new responsibilities, and back on his bike in and out of the city again.

In August, a winter-sunshine filled weekend away for Cat and a best friend at the coast, to recharge and explore the new holiday house we had found.

In September, we finally made it out to Tulip Top Gardens and discovered that not only are they lovely, they have great running/playing space AND free sausages (and apparently small kids gets you extra sausages). And Dutch Pancakes. Yum.

In October a dear friend got married (at last!) in a beautiful ceremony at one of the local homesteads. That same week, Mair came out for a month, spending lots of time getting to know the kids, exploring around Canberra and nearby New South Wales, and rounded it off with a weekend at the coast with us in November.

And finally, in December, we had a family holiday at the coast, in the beautiful holiday house that I suspect will see us for many more years to come.

Lucy is very much a beach baby, sand and water keep her happy all day. She doesn't mind whether it's hot, cold, lake, river, ocean, rain or tapwater, thankfully, so we get out as often as we can for a splash whether it's on the front deck, one of the local spots, or muddy puddles. She has very specific ideas about what should happen at every stage of the day, and her strong little personality shines through in an incredible way. She loves to snuggle, and to spin, and to sing, and will always boogie when the music come son.

Chloe above all loves to spend time with her friends and doesn't really mind where (though the trains at Cockington Green would have to be a favourite). She is a whirligig of excitement, wonder and passion, constantly on the move, and always finding something new and exciting to tell us about or show us. She likes to play 'pretend' games with her friends, and talks to whoever and whatever is around. She makes friend after friend after friend, and surprised me at the beach in December by remembering the little girl we spent a single afternoon with a month earlier at the same spot. She's very proud of having learnt to write most of her letters, her name, and is so excited for 'big school' next year.

Lucy and Chloe together are an explosive mixture of love and frustration, beautiful sharing and giggles together, and 'No, MINE! Not yours!'. They both love to play with duplo, they both love marshmallows, they both love dinosaurs, and they both love swings at the playground.

2018 will bring big changes particularly for the girls. Pre-school, 'big-girls ballet', and swimming lessons for Chloe; both daycare and home days without Chloe for Lucy, and a toddler music class; our first family holiday *with* grandparents and who knows what else. But as a family, we can face it all head on with excitement, support and love, just like we dealt with 2017.

