

Local identities gear up for festive season

By RAE WILSON

CELEBRITY spotters claim to have seen Australian netballer Lauren Nourse and tennis star Ana Ivanovic floating around the Sunshine Coast this festive season.

And former prime minister Kevin Rudd has confirmed he will spend Christmas at Sunshine Beach, which he has long called his "other home".

"My family is looking forward to spending Christmas on the Sunshine Coast, as we have done many, many times before," he said.

"Merry Christmas to everyone on the Sunshine Coast."

But what are our own Coast identities up to tomorrow?

Real estate entrepreneur Amber Werchon is celebrating her first Christmas as a mother with baby Max, who was born in September, and husband Paul.

"We'll have breakfast at my house with my family and then go to Paul's family after that," she said.

"Then we got to Straddy between Christmas and New Year with his extended family.

"Max won't know what's really going on but mum and dad will help him open his presents."

Around the world sailor Jessica Watson will spend Christmas Day lunch with nine others in her Sydney to Hobart crew at Rushcutters Bay in Sydney.

The energetic 18-year-old will then do the final preparations on the 38-foot Ella Bache Another Challenge pink yacht for her big race, which starts at 1pm on Boxing Day.

"They'll be packing the boat, making sure everything is in order from food to packing the sails properly and double checking the weather patterns," her manager Andrew Fraser said, noting Jessica was enjoying five days without media until Sunday.

Noosa restaurateur Jim Berardo said he would celebrate the big day with about 500 others at his Hastings Street bistro and restaurant.

"We have a fabulous Christmas Day celebration with carols, a magician, some fabulous music and a five-course degustation lunch. Then for dinner we have a three-course prefix dinner," he said.

Sunshine Coast Mayor Bob Abbot said he would spend Christmas Day with his partner Sue at a friend's place, Boxing Day with his two sons and then enjoy five days at Woodford.

Bruce and Denise Morcombe will

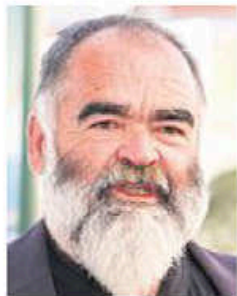


PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

CELEBRATION: Amber Werchon and baby Max prepare to celebrate their first Christmas. Pictured from top left are Jessica Watson, Jim Berardo, Bob Abbot and Bruce Morcombe.

spend Christmas at their Tasmania holiday home "catching our breath".

After a harrowing year dealing with the discovery of their son Daniel's remains, the Morcombes hope to take some special time with family away from it all.

Denise's parents flew in to Tasmania on Monday and sons Dean and Bra-

dley flew in yesterday.

"Denise likes to put all the trimmings on the lunch with turkey, ham and crayfish," Mr Morcombe said.

"We've had three of the past four Christmases here so we have the tree and all the decorations.

"Some people find it humorous, but I think it's sensible. I leave the Christ-

mas tree up and just carry it out to the shed. I have even glued the baubles on so they don't fall off. So when I have to put up the tree, it's done in three minutes."

Ingredients co-founder and Birmingham Books' Rachael Bermingham is hosting her entire family at her Buderim home for Christmas lunch.