

SIMONE BUCHANAN#

MY ADOPTION DREAM#

The *Neighbours* star has fallen in love with a group of gorgeous Balinese children#

Bali's usually associated with lying on the beach and partying, but actress Simone Buchanan is here for the kids. She and her 10-year-old son Tane are at a Balinese orphanage and they're bowled over by affection from the excited youngsters. The pair are in their element playing with the kids and giving away clothes they've brought from Melbourne.

It's not your average holiday, but Simone's passionate about bringing happiness to the children at the Jodie O'Shea Orphanage in Denpasar.

'It's quite a helpless feeling knowing there are so many children to help,' Simone says. 'The kids are beautiful and polite. Every single one of them came up and shook my hand. I was struck by their energy — quite happy, not tragic.'

The orphanage is run by Alison Chester and her husband Yanto, who named the refuge after Australian Bali bombing victim Jodie O'Shea.

Jodie suffered severe burns in the 2002 terrorist attack and Alison nursed her in hospital before she was airlifted to Perth. Sadly, she died soon after.

'Alison's a very special person,' Simone says. 'She formed a bond with Jodie and built the orphanage in her name. There are a lot of children in need in Bali and she wanted to make a difference.'

Alison ensures the children, many of whom were sent to live at the orphanage

by poverty-stricken parents, receive an education and regularly visit their families.

The former *Hay Day* star, who's now winning over a new generation of fans as Samantha Fitzgerald on *Neighbours*, made an instant connection with the children.

'There are quite a few I felt deeply for, particularly some of the teenage girls. They were going through puberty and were wanting some female company,' she says.

The orphanage is a world away from the upbringing Tane has in Melbourne.

'Tane's taken a lot away from this. He has a lot of empathy,' Simone explains. 'He insisted on bringing all the clothes that don't fit him anymore to give to the kids.'

'There are so many children to help. I was struck by their energy — happy, not tragic' #

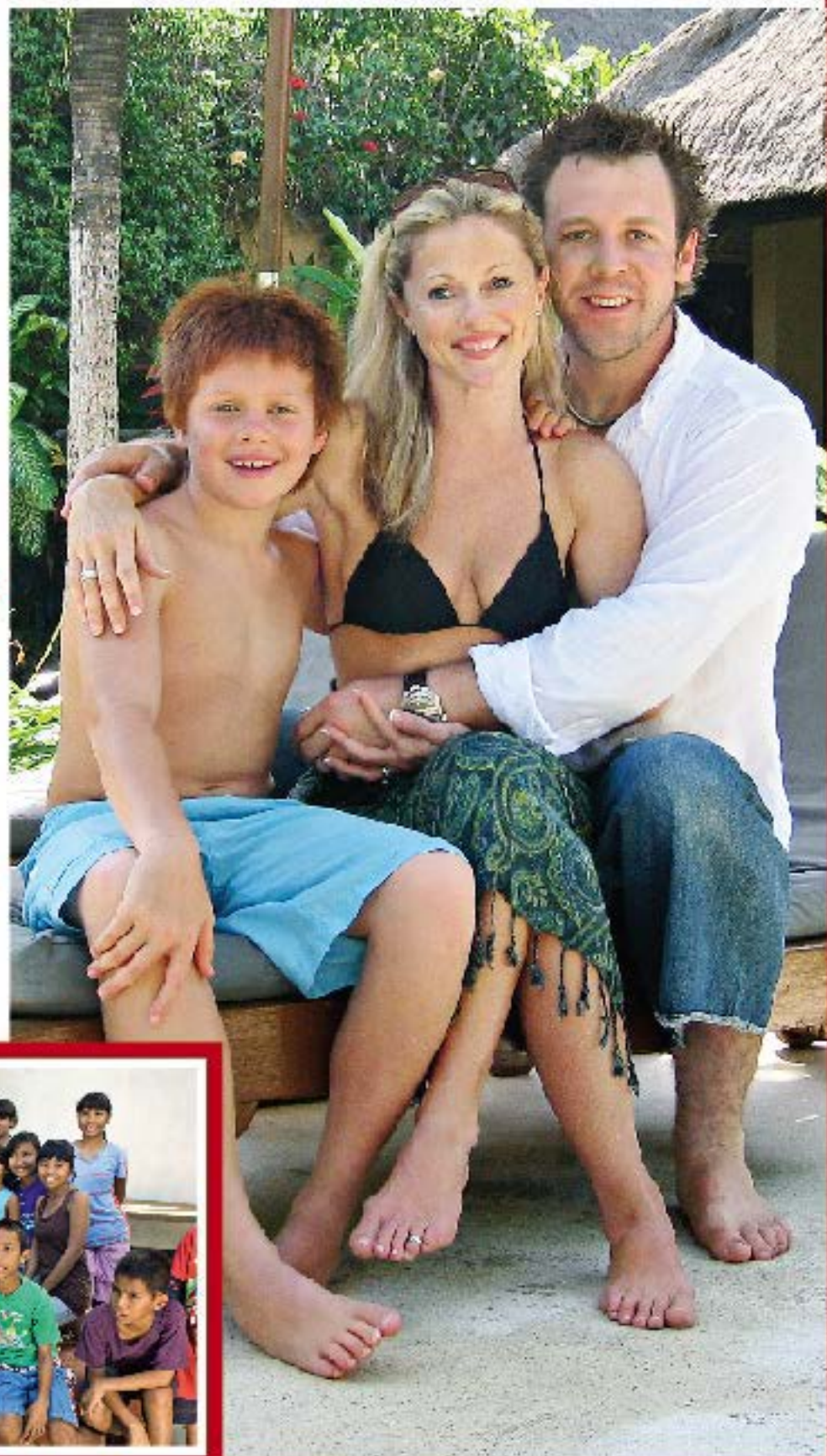
Simone's love of Bali is obvious — she spent her April honeymoon on the island with husband Brett Smith, and now the couple are looking to expand their family.

'Brett's been amazing with my son [from a previous relationship]. He'd like to have a baby of his own, and if it doesn't work out then we're open to adoption,' she says.

It's been a year of highs for Simone, who turned 40 this year, resurrected her acting career and married her soulmate.

'A lot's happened in my life in the past 12 months, personally and professionally,' she says. 'It's been a great year.'

• Visit www.careforkidsbali.com to donate. *Neighbours* screens 6.30pm weekdays on Network Ten.



Far right: Simone with Tane and her husband Brett. Above: Alison and Simone are passionate about helping the kids. Right: The children loved the clothes from Tane.

