

Qld: Rafter to quit Sydney for Sunshine coast

By Steve Connolly and Dave Donaghy

BRISBANE, Feb 8 AAP - Tennis hero and former Australian of the Year Pat Rafter plans to leave Sydney and move back to his home state of Queensland.

Rafter said today he was hoping to shift to the Sunshine Coast with his wife Lara and young children Joshua and India later this year or in early 2007.

The 33-year-old has lived in Sydney since his retirement from tennis in 2003 and paid \$5.5 million for a home in the harbourside suburb of Mosman.

But Rafter said he "belongs" north of the border as he and Lara both have family living on the Sunshine Coast.

The couple also own a house at up market Sunshine Beach, just south of Noosa.

"We're actually moving back here probably at the end of this year or the beginning of next year," the former world number one told reporters in Brisbane.

"Sydney's a great city. It's just a fantastic city but this is where I want to be.

"All my family's up there and that's where I want to be as well."

Mosman real estate agents said Rafter could expect to make a substantial profit if he sells his home, which has views of Sydney Harbour.

Rafter was in Brisbane today for the announcement of additional land being granted for the \$60 million State Tennis Centre, to be built at Tennyson in the city's south-west.

The two-time US Open winner said he aimed to do more coaching with juniors.

"I'm looking forward to that," Rafter said.

"I've got to do something, I'm not doing a lot."

Rafter said he would be working with former Australian Davis Cup coach Tony Roche, who is currently guiding men's world number one Roger Federer.

"The way I've positioned myself with that is that if a state coach thinks a player is doing really well, then they can come down and have a hit with myself and (Tony) Roche," he said.

"But we're not going to waste our time hitting with kids who don't want to be there.

"I definitely need to get back out on the court and hit a few balls because I need to get fit."

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