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Hey everyone,

I'm here as Jaco's best mate from our uni days at UNSW, the bloke I built start-up dreams with and paddled out for more dawn surfs than I can count.

To Sophie and little Ava, to Lan and Tu, and to Daniel — we're wrapping our arms around you today.

We're here to celebrate a life that ran hot and generous for forty good years.

Jaco — Jacob Minh Nguyen — was Bankstown through and through.

He carried that big-hearted, cheeky energy from the streets he grew up on into every room he walked into.

At UNSW he fell in love with computer science the way he fell in love with everything — headfirst, curious, and convinced it could make the world a bit fairer for the underdog.

He became a brilliant software engineer, then co-founded a small tech studio where “creative coder” wasn't just a job title — it was permission to play, to experiment, to bring people in.

In between commits and client calls, he was down at community sport, backing kids who didn't think they belonged until he showed them they did.

Weekends?

You knew where to find him.

Coaching junior footy, somehow getting a pack of nine-year-olds to focus with a mix of dad jokes, patience, and a grin the size of the goalposts.

He taught them how to pass, sure — but mostly how to pass the ball to the kid who hadn't had a touch yet.

He said yes to adventure like it was a religion.

Surfboards on the roof before sunrise.

Guitar jams on balconies

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A camera always slung over his shoulder, hunting that split-second of colour at dusk.

Cooking pho for a table that somehow kept growing as strangers became friends.

And those last-minute texts — “Up the coast now? Pack a towel.” — that wrecked your plans and made your week.

My favourite memory?

After a bleary hackathon, he dragged me down to Bondi for a sunrise session.

Water like liquid glass.

We shared banh mi for breakfast, sandy hands and all.

Sitting on the wall, wetsuits steaming, he laid out plans bigger than the horizon — a studio that hired on potential, not polish; tech that served people before profit; a life that kept room for surf, for Sophie, for the family he knew he wanted.

He stuck to that.

He really did.

At home, he was Sophie’s partner and Ava’s devoted dad — the softest place for their hearts to land.

He’d race from a deploy to bedtime stories, guitar in lap, lullabies drifting into giggles.

He talked about Ava like she was his best invention.

And to Lan and Tu, he was a proud son who never forgot the shoulders he stood on.

To Daniel, a brother who’d turn up with tools, soup, or surf wax — whatever the day needed.

He believed in loyalty, in inclusion, in backing the underdog every single time.

That showed up in the way he mentored junior devs, the way he listened before he spoke, and the way he rallied us for the annual Beyond Blue charity run.

He’d match our donations with a wink — “Double or nothing, mates” — and then run the course like it was a joyful protest against silence.

What will we miss?

That booming laugh that rolled across a room before he did.

His talent for turning strangers into mates by the end of an elevator ride.

And those impulsive road trips up the coast that reset your soul and clogged your camera roll.

Today hurts.

But standing here, I can hear him clearing his throat, teasing us for getting too serious, and then nudging us forward.

Take a kid under your wing.

Cook a big pot of pho and invite more people than chairs.

Match a donation.

Say yes to the dawn surf, the road north, the new idea.

Keep the circle open.

Sophie, Ava — you were and are the centre of his story.

When the waves feel too big, know that an army of Jaco's people is paddling beside you.

Lan and Tu, Daniel — thank you for shaping the man who shaped so many of us.

Jaco, mate — you lived wide awake.

You taught us that curiosity is a compass, that loyalty is a verb, and that there's always time for one more wave.

We'll carry that forward.

And when the sun comes up over Bondi, or the freeway bends toward the sea, we'll hear your laugh in the wind and we'll say yes. Always yes.

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