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Good morning everyone,

I’m Sophie, PJ’s daughter, and I want to thank you for being here—family, friends, workmates, neighbours, the surf club community. It means the world to Mum, to Michael and me, to Ava and Leo, and to Dad’s brother and sister, Mark and Aileen.

Dad was born Peter James Lawson on 22 July 1959 in Newcastle, NSW.
He passed away peacefully on 18 March this year, aged 66.
He was our PJ—a name that somehow fit his easy smile and that cheeky wink he gave when words weren’t needed.

He grew up in Newcastle, the son of a working town, and he learned early the dignity of doing things properly.
He apprenticed as an electrician, moved down to Sydney in his twenties with a toolbox and a stubborn belief that he’d make his own way.
He married Mum—Helen—in 1986. Forty years together.
In that time he built a home, a family, and a small business that carried his name and his standards.

PJ became a master electrician who trained dozens of apprentices.
He didn’t just teach them how to wire a switchboard; he showed them how to knock on a door with their shirt tucked in, how to explain a job straight, how to own their mistakes, and how to stay until the lights actually came back on.
Integrity in work, fairness, mateship, and showing up when it counts—those weren’t slogans in our house. They were just how he moved through the day.

If you knew PJ, you knew practical kindness.
He was generous with his time and his tools—sometimes too generous with the tools, if you ask Mum, who kept an inventory in her head because the shed

looked like Bunnings had exploded.
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But he loved it in there—tinkering in the shed, finding the right washer no one else could see, oil on his hands, thinking five steps ahead.

He loved the water as well.
Summers were made of sailing on the harbour, sunburned noses, the boom swinging a little too close for comfort, and Dad laughing that quiet laugh of his—half-chuckle, half-approval—when we got it right.
In winter, it was the Swans. In summer, it was cricket on in the background and a BBQ going, Dad at the grill with that calm concentration he brought to everything.
And on Saturday mornings, he'd be at the oval coaching junior cricket, showing a nervous kid how to set their feet and keep their eye on the ball, the same way he'd show a first-year apprentice where to start when everything looks like a tangle.

He also stood watch on our beaches through Surf Life Saving, a volunteer in the truest sense—quiet, reliable, there before dawn, last to go home.
It suited him: the discipline, the mateship, the purpose of simply being useful when it mattered.

For me, he was my loving dad and mentor.
We were close and spoke most days—usually about nothing and everything.
A burst pipe here. How the Swans were shaping up. Whether the kids needed new school shoes.
He had a reassuring voice on the phone—level, steady, like a plumb line.
He never made the drama bigger than it needed to be.
He also had a knack for fixing anything—especially on a Sunday when every shop was shut and it was just you, Dad, and whatever you'd managed to find in the bottom drawer.

My favourite memory is an easy one to reach for.
Early morning swims at Coogee when the water still felt like it belonged to the gulls.

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We’d swim, then we’d sit with bacon-and-egg rolls, hair dripping onto the table, and he’d pull a pen from his pocket and map out our week on a napkin.
Who needed a lift. What job had to be finished by Thursday. Where the wind would be best for a sail.
It’s funny how a small ritual becomes a whole education.
From those napkins I learned how to plan without making a fuss, how to make room for other people’s needs, and how to start the day with purpose.

Dad was patient and practical.
He was quietly funny—more eyebrow than punchline.
Reliable as sunrise.
If you were one of his apprentices, you might remember the way he could stand in a half-built room, look around, and point straight to the thing that would go wrong in six months if you didn’t fix it today.
If you were family, you knew the softer versions—how he’d let Ava “help” with the screwdriver and somehow make it work, how Leo would toddle after him on the lawn and Dad would match his pace without ever drawing attention to it.
He was a proud Pop. He wore that title like a favourite cap.

He loved simple gatherings—backyard BBQs where he’d burn exactly three sausages “for those who like it proper,” and then serve everyone first.
He loved the Swans, summer cricket, and the way a boat hums when the wind and the tide and the skipper are all in accord.
He loved Mum in a way that showed up in actions—forty years of cups of tea, of late-night call-outs followed by early-morning school runs, of the quiet trust you build day by day.

What will we miss most?
That reassuring voice on the other end of the phone.
The cheeky wink that said, “We’ll sort it.”
The way he could fix anything—from a tripped circuit to a wobbly heart—by being present, patient, and precise.

To Mum—thank you for walking every step with him.

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To Michael—your steadiness today is exactly what Dad taught us.
To Mark and Aileen—he treasured being your brother.
To Ava and Leo—Pop’s lessons are already in you, tucked into your kindness and your curiosity, and in the way you both like to “help.”

Dad believed a life is measured by the people you lift up.
You can see his measure in the apprentices who run their own jobs now, in the kids who hold a bat a little straighter, in the neighbours who knew which number to call when the lights went out, and in the surf club crew who counted on him without needing to ask.

As we say goodbye, let’s honour him the way he lived—by keeping it grounded, useful, and decent.
Wear your smart-casual today without fuss; he’d appreciate that.
And in lieu of flowers, if you’re able, please consider a donation to Surf Life Saving NSW—an organisation that meant a great deal to him and to us.

We’ll carry him forward in the ordinary things.
In a well-coiled extension lead.
In a promise kept.
In a Sunday fix that saves the day.
In a napkin plan that makes the week feel doable.

Dad, thank you for the love you gave so generously, for the standards you held without making them heavy, and for the life you built with your hands and your heart.
We’ll keep showing up when it counts.
We’ll keep it fair.
We’ll do the job properly.

And when the phone feels too quiet, we’ll hear your voice anyway, steady as ever:
Take your time. Check it twice. You’ve got this.

We love you, PJ.

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Safe winds, calm seas.

We’ll see you in the morning light.

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