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Good afternoon everyone,

I'm Pa's eldest granddaughter, and today I want to say thank you for coming to celebrate the life of Bernard Patrick O'Connell—our Pa—born 22 August 1945, eighty years young in spirit right to the end.

He grew up in Newcastle, learned early how to roll his sleeves up, and never really rolled them back down.

He became an electrician, later a site foreman, and the kind of bloke who could look at a tangle of wires—or a tangle of people—and calmly set things right.

He married Joan in 1969, and with her built a life that was steady, funny, and generous.

Together they raised three kids—Mark, Alison and Tom—and later welcomed seven very lucky grandkids.

Pa coached junior cricket with patience and a whistle that could turn chaos into fielding practice.

He'd show a kid how to hold a bat, then show them how to hold their nerve.

After retirement, he and Joan took the caravan across WA—endless tracks, small towns, big skies—collecting sunburnt maps, new mates, and a serious jaffle repertoire.

He loved a bushwalk that ended in a view, a campfire that ended in a singalong, and classic Aussie rock turned up just a smidge too loud.

He had a twinkle in his eye that meant something good was about to happen.

He was witty without being sharp, generous without keeping score, and endlessly practical in a way that made you feel safe.

At the local Men's Shed he was in his element—fixing wobbly tables, sharpening tools, and quietly checking in on blokes who needed more than a new hinge.

My favourite memory with Pa is on a dusty paddock track, learning to drive his old manual ute.

Stall—laugh.

Stall—laugh.

And then that moment when it clicked and we rolled forward like we knew what we were doing.

He didn't make a speech about it; he just nodded once and said, "There you go," as if handing me a key I'd keep forever.

He stood for mateship, humility, and showing up for family.

He believed you leave things better than you found them—sheds, teams, campsites, conversations.

He showed love through action: an early-morning text—"You right?"—a quick fix before you even asked, a chair pulled into the circle so no one stood at the edge.

What we'll miss most is that booming laugh that could cut through a crowded room,

those dawn check-ins that arrived before your alarm,

and the way he made every person feel like they'd just come home.

Pa didn't collect fancy things.

He collected people, moments, and small victories—a perfect cuppa, a straight fence line, a tail-end batsman finding the middle of the bat.

He taught us that competence is a kind of kindness, and that humour and warmth go further than any job title.

To Joan, his steadfast partner; to Dad, Aunty Alison, and Uncle Tom; to all seven of us grandkids—he was our champion, our teacher, and our biggest laugh.

And he still is, because the things he passed on don't wear out:

keep your word,

share your tools,

call your mum,

and always pack a spare fuse.

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In Pa's honour, thank you for the colourful shirts brightening the room.
After the service, we'll raise a ginger beer and tell the stories that make us grin.
That's how we keep him close—by doing what he did best: welcoming each other in, fixing what we can, and finding the joke that opens the heart.

Thank you, Pa, for every lift, every lesson, every laugh.
We'll take it from here—one steady step, one good job, one kind text at a time.

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