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Thank you for being here today.

I'm Emma, Tom's wife for twenty-two years,
his teammate in everything,
and still, very much, his person.

Tom was born on 15 May 1972 and left us on 2 April this year, aged 53.
Those numbers mark a life, but they don't explain the way he filled every day in
between.

He grew up in Newcastle,
a kid who could find his way around a toolbox before he could find his way
around an essay.

He apprenticed as an electrician,
then took the leap to start his own small business.

He didn't build it by shouting the loudest.

He built it by turning up,

by keeping his word,

by doing a tidy job and making sure the light switch did what a light switch is
meant to do.

He mentored apprentices the way good men do—patiently, with a raised
eyebrow when they deserved it,
and with pride when they got it right.

At home, he coached junior footy.

He was that parent who remembered oranges for half-time and everyone's
nickname,

and somehow made the nervous kids feel less nervous just by standing nearby.

On weekends he'd throw boards in the car at an hour that felt rude,

chase a few waves before most of us were awake,

then come home smelling of salt and sunscreen, ready to burn a BBQ and tell us it was “perfectly charred”.

Tom loved weekends up the coast with us—simple as that.
Pack the esky, forget half the things, and off we’d go.

My favourite memory is camping at Seal Rocks.
He woke Jack and Sophie before sunrise,
whispered like a man trying not to wake the ocean,
and shuffled them down to the water with rods that looked taller than they were.
The sky went from charcoal to pink,
the kids caught nothing but seaweed,
and the toast back at camp was black as coal.
He stood there in his thongs, butter sliding off the toast, and somehow made us
all laugh so hard it didn’t matter.
That was Tom—turning a small moment into a good story,
turning an ordinary morning into a day we still talk about.

He was down-to-earth.
He was reliable in that unshowy way that means more than any speech.
If your power tripped at midnight, if your trailer light wouldn’t behave, if a storm
tore off a fence panel,
he was there before you finished explaining the problem.
He was generous with his time,
cheeky with his humour,
and the first to lend a hand—often with that lopsided grin that said,
“Don’t make a fuss, mate, pass me the screwdriver.”

He loved early surfs,
watching the Knights,
backyard BBQs that ran long because the conversation did,
and tinkering in the shed where every jar was mysteriously useful.
He valued family first,
honesty in work,

mateship,

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and keeping your word.

He didn't have a motto written on the wall,

he had it baked into how he lived.

To his parents, Lorraine and Peter—thank you for the boy you raised who became the man I loved.

To his sister Kate—he was so proud of you, and he never finished a story about you without that half-smile.

To our children, Jack and Sophie—your dad adored you.

Not just the proud-dad-on-the-sidelines kind of love, though there was plenty of that,

but the everyday kind—helping with a school project at the kitchen table,

teaching you how to check a fuse,

listening, really listening, when you needed him.

If you ever want to find him, start with the way you look out for each other.

He'll be there.

People ask what we'll miss most.

I will miss his bear hugs—the kind that pressed the day's worries into silence.

I'll miss his steady calm in a crisis—his "let's just sort it" voice that steadied the room.

And I'll miss the way he made every ordinary day feel special—like a Saturday afternoon could be a small holiday if you had sausages, a breeze, and the people you love.

Tom's legacy won't sit on a shelf.

It lives in every apprentice who learned to check twice before switching the power back on.

It lives in the junior players who remember a coach who believed in them.

It lives in the friends and neighbours who knew that if you called Tom, you weren't alone with your broken thing or your heavy day.

And it lives in us—Jack, Sophie and me—in the way we try to be decent, try to be brave, and try to laugh when the toast is burnt.

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I want to thank the staff at John Hunter Hospital for their compassionate care.
You treated Tom with kindness and treated us with generosity.
We will always be grateful.

If you're looking for what to do with the ache,
I think Tom would make it simple.
Ring your mate back.
Show up on time.
Finish the job properly.
Take your kids to the water at sunrise even if the fish aren't biting.
Tell the truth.
Keep your word.
And when life feels too big, put the kettle on and start with what you can fix.

Tom, my best friend and teammate,
thank you for the years we had,
for the love that was easy and the work that was worth it,
for the home we built that was never just four walls.

We will carry you in the way we live,
in the way we love each other,
and in the moments we turn an ordinary day into something worth
remembering.

Rest easy, love.
We've got it from here.

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