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Family, friends, colleagues, and members of the community—thank you for being here today to honour the life of my brother, Daniel James O'Connor—Dan to most of us.

We gather in sorrow, yes, but also with deep gratitude, because Dan gave us a lot to be grateful for.

I speak as his younger brother, Sean. To me, Dan was more than the eldest; he was the steady hand in our family, the quiet compass we'd look to when the weather turned.

Dan was born on 5 July 1975 in Perth.

He grew up here, with the gum trees and sea breeze, learned to tie his laces on paths we all still walk, and carried a homespun sense of fairness that never left him.

He studied education at UWA, not because it was an easy path—anyone in a classroom knows it isn't—but because he believed, very simply, that learning changes lives.

He believed that doors should open more easily for children than they had for their parents, and he chose a life that helped turn that belief into something practical and daily.

He became a dedicated primary school teacher and, over the years, a respected

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He led not with volume but with consistency.

If you visited his office on any weekday, you'd likely find a tottering pile of readers, a hand-written note to a parent, and a child sitting across from him being taken as seriously as any adult.

He didn't confuse discipline with punishment.

He thought discipline meant teaching a kid how to get back on track, and giving them the tools to do it.

That's the kind of leader he was.

Committed to lifting every child in his care, not just the ones who found it easy.

Dan loved his work, but he loved his people even more.

He was a devoted husband to Sarah, and a loving dad to Jack and Liam.

To watch Dan with you, boys, was to see a man at ease with the most important job he ever had.

You'll remember this yourselves: the backyard cricket tests that ran until the light gave out, his long and patient coaching on the front drive, and the way he let you win just enough to think you'd cracked it—only for you to realise later that he was teaching you confidence, not inflating your score.

He did the same with me when we were kids.

I can still hear the thud of a worn tennis ball on a battered bat, the small grin

he'd give when I got him out, and the bigger one when I knew, at last, how to play the straight drive.

Our parents, Michael and Aileen, raised us to know that respect isn't a slogan, it's how you speak and how you listen.

Dan absorbed that early on.

He folded it into every part of his life.

He served his community through Rotary, he was a steady presence at school breakfast programs, and he coached cricket at the local club.

If there was a Saturday morning without his stubby pencil tucked behind one ear, planning batting orders on a dog-eared score sheet, I don't remember it.

He loved the game—not only for the sport of it, but for what it teaches: patience, shared effort, the idea that a tidy single can be as valuable as a boundary.

He played life the same way.

There was more to him than classrooms and crease lines.

He loved bushwalking in Kings Park, and he could spot a black cockatoo faster than anyone I know.

He found calm in the shed, planing a rough edge into a clean line, coaxing a length of jarrah into a bookshelf or a toy box, sanding and sanding until the grain came up like a map.

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He was fiercely loyal to the Fremantle Dockers—loyalty being one of his less diplomatic attributes, but we pardoned him that.

And he held, always, a gentle humour that never bit down on anyone.

His dad jokes were terrible and somehow perfect, deployed with such straight-faced timing that you had no choice but to groan and smile at once.

Integrity, patience, fairness—these weren't words he wore on a badge.

They were muscle memory.

He did the right thing, especially when it was hard.

If a decision at school cost him an easy afternoon but made a child safer, that was no decision at all.

If a conversation needed to be had because a colleague or a parent deserved the truth, he found a way to make the truth clear and kind.

He thought leadership was mostly listening, and the rest was showing up when you said you would.

My favourite memories of Dan are simple and were never designed to be stories.

Backyard cricket, the long tests that spanned school holidays and summers—he'd set a field with milk crates and old jumpers, and somehow that rough pitch felt like the WACA.

And those weekends camping at Margaret River, the two of us by the fire, watching the sparks rise into the dark, trading stories that weren't dramatic but felt important at the time.

He'd talk about a child he was proud of, a team he thought could do better if they trusted one another, a new jig he was planning for the shed.

Nothing flashy, no declarations.

Just warmth and purpose and a sense that Monday would be better because we'd planned for it.

Sarah, you and Dan built a home defined by love without spectacle.

You matched him stride for stride, through good seasons and rough ones, and the partnership you lived was a lesson to the rest of us.

Jack and Liam, your dad trusted you.

That is a gift that doesn't wear out.

You will carry his voice with you—in your judgement, in your humour, and in your instinct to include the kid at the edge of the group.

When you're not sure what to do, ask what your dad would have thought was fair, and you'll find your way.

And to Mum and Dad—Michael and Aileen—your son reflected you.

His decency was not accidental.

You gave him foundations that he built on every day of his life.

There is a particular silence that follows someone like Dan.

It's in the spaces he used to fill at family gatherings, the calm he could bring to a conversation heading the wrong way, the reliable knock on the door when help was needed.

We will miss his wise counsel.

We will miss that steady presence.

And yes, we will miss the pun that arrived precisely two beats after anyone wanted to hear it.

But I don't believe the end of a life is the end of its influence.

Dan believed that education is a pathway.

He walked it with countless kids, and because of him, many of them will step more lightly into adulthood.

If each of us takes something from the way he lived—his fairness, his patience, his capacity to serve without needing a spotlight—then his work continues, in more places than one person could ever reach.

In lieu of flowers, our family will establish the Daniel O'Connor Scholarship to support local students in need.

It feels right that Dan's name should sit quietly behind a young person taking the next step.

He would have liked that the help was practical and aimed straight at the future.

Details will be shared with the community in the coming days, and I hope that, together, we can turn our grief into something that opens doors for others, the way Dan always tried to do.

We are not here to pretend that everything is fine.

It isn't.

Fifty is far too young.

There are questions without answers.

There is an ache that sits with us, and it should.

But we are also not here only to lament.

We are here to name the good and to honour it.

To remember the countless mornings Dan spent pouring cereal for kids who needed breakfast before they could learn, the afternoons he stayed back after training, the late-night phone calls returned to worried parents, the care with which he shaped both wood and character.

If you want to know the measure of a person, look at who gathers when they're gone.

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Look at the former students who wrote to say that Mr O'Connor saw them when they felt invisible.

Look at the colleagues who speak about a leader who stood beside them, not above them.

Look at his sons, who carry themselves with a quiet confidence that didn't appear from nowhere.

Look at his wife, who built a life with him that was safe, lively, and kind.

Look at our parents, who raised a son who made decency look ordinary.

When I think of Dan now, I picture him at the crease, patient, grounded, setting himself for the long spell.

I hear him at Kings Park, pointing out the shape of a bird across the sky.

I see him in the shed, coaxing a stubborn piece of timber into something useful and beautiful, shaving it back until the line is true.

And I feel, most of all, his hand on my shoulder at times when I needed it.

If you felt that too, take it with you.

Offer it to someone else.

That's how we keep him close.

Dan, thank you for being my brother and my mentor.

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Thank you for the lessons delivered without fanfare, for the good humour that softened hard days, for the way you made room for others.

You were the steady hand in our family.

We will do our best to honour you by steadying one another now.

We will look after Sarah, and Jack, and Liam.

We will keep an eye on Mum and Dad.

We will keep our jokes as bad as yours—not because we'll enjoy them, but because you would have.

And we will keep faith with what you believed: that community is built in small acts of service, that respect is earned by offering it, and that doing the right thing matters most when nobody is watching.

Farewell, Dan.

Your innings was shorter than we wished, but you batted with courage and grace.

What you stood for remains with us.

We will carry it forward.

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