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Family, friends, workmates, neighbours — thank you for being here to farewell and celebrate our Soph, Sophie Anne McKenzie.

She was my big sister and my fiercest protector.

We spoke almost every day.

If I went quiet for too long, she'd pop up with a message before sunrise — a simple check-in that somehow made the day steadier.

Soph was born on 14 March 1987 and left us on 28 March this year, just 39.

The numbers don't measure the size of her life, but they mark a span filled with service, loyalty, and a lot of laughter that arrived exactly when it was needed.

We grew up in Newcastle, where she captained the school swim team.

That makes sense when you think about it — Soph could get people moving in the same direction without ever raising her voice.

She was brave and practical, with that dry Aussie humour that could cut through noise and nerves in a single line.

In any crisis, she was the calm in the room.

She took that calm to the University of Newcastle and into nursing.

The emergency department at John Hunter Hospital became her place — frenetic, relentless, and somehow, exactly where she belonged.

She thrived under pressure.

She mentored junior staff, not by grand speeches, but by standing shoulder to shoulder on the worst nights and sticking around after a hard shift to explain the why behind the what.

On weekends she was out on community health drives, sleeves rolled up, answering the questions people were too shy to ask.

And the ocean was her other shift.

Surf Life Saving at Merewether — early mornings, salt drying on the car seat, and that squint she got when she watched the break and read it better than most.

She swam ocean laps, ran the trails through Glenrock, and on fundraiser days somehow turned out trays of lamingtons that disappeared before morning tea. Come winter nights you'd find her in a Knights scarf, yelling encouragement like she was on the sideline.

Soph had a way of keeping things fair.

Service to others, showing up when it mattered, keeping your word — these weren't slogans to her; they were habits.

If she said she'd be there, she was there, even if it meant three stops on the way and picking up milk.

My favourite memory is a dawn at Bar Beach, both of us shivering and stubborn. I finally stood up on the board for more than a heartbeat.

She whooped like I'd won a comp, then yelled, "Right, bacon and egg rolls," and sprinted up the sand.

That was Soph — celebrate the small win, then make sure everyone's fed.

She carried that spirit home.

Beloved partner to Liam Turner — they built a life full of small, steady joys.

Soph was a devoted mum to Isla, whose hand she held in that fiercely gentle way of hers.

Daughter to Karen and Peter, big sister to me, Daniel, and to our younger brother, Joel.

We always knew she had our backs, and we always knew there'd be a text in the morning if she thought we needed one.

In the ED, on the beach, and at home, she was a strong advocate for mental health first aid training.

She knew that knowing what to do in the first minutes — with words as much as with bandages — could save a life.

If you ever saw her settle a panicked room with a single steady sentence, you

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What will we miss?

Her unstoppable laugh — the one that started in her eyes before any sound came out.

Those early-morning check-ins that said, without fuss, “You’ve got this, and I’m here.”

And that feeling, whether you were family, a mate, a patient, or a stranger — that you were safe because Soph had turned up.

She asked for cheerful colours today.

Of course she did.

Even in grief, she’d want us to remember the light she carried and the light she left behind.

And if you hear Crowded House’s *Weather With You* later and feel a catch in your throat, that’s okay — she loved that song.

It fits her somehow: take the weather with you, make your own steadiness, bring your own sunshine and share it around.

There’s a quiet kind of heroism in the way Soph lived.

Not dramatic, not showy.

Just loyal, brave, practical.

She didn’t try to be impressive.

She tried to be useful.

And because of that, she changed more lives than she ever let herself believe.

To Mum and Dad — Karen and Peter — she was proud of the way you raised us to look out for one another.

To Joel — she’d say keep lacing up, keep going, and call me after.

To Liam — you were her person.

Thank you for loving our sister so well.

To Isla — your mum’s love is stitched through everything around you.

You’ll hear it in the sea at Merewether, you’ll see it in a trail at Glenrock, and you’ll feel it every time someone shows up and does what they said they’d do.

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We'll carry her forward by doing what she taught us.

We'll show up.

We'll keep our word.

We'll lend the calm we have to someone who's lost theirs.

And we'll make time for a bacon and egg roll after an early swim, because celebrating the small wins is one way to keep her close.

In lieu of flowers, our family suggests donations to Beyond Blue — a cause Soph supported and spoke about often.

And for anyone who wants to reach out, our family email is cto@kuchventures.com.

Soph, you were our anchor and our spark.

You made hard days survivable and good days brighter.

We didn't get enough time, but we got you — fully, fiercely, and with that laugh that still feels like a promise.

Thank you for every dawn text, every rescue, every lesson in fairness, every lamington, every sideline cheer.

Thank you for being our big sister.

We love you.

We'll keep showing up.

And we'll carry your weather with us, wherever we go.

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