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Hello everyone,

Thank you for coming, in all your bright and bold glory.

Emily would've loved this.

She always said life looked better in colour.

I'm Olivia, Em's big sister.

My little sister, my partner-in-crime, the family's spark.

Emily Grace O'Connor was born on 22 November 1992.

She left us on 5 April this year, just 33.

The numbers sound clinical when I say them out loud.

But anyone who knew Em knows how much living she fit between those dates.

We grew up in Melbourne's inner north where a tram was as familiar as a backyard, and where Em learned very early to make a small pocket of the city feel like a village.

She had a talent for meeting a neighbour once and greeting them forever.

She studied primary education at Monash because she knew exactly who she wanted to stand beside—kids—especially the quiet ones, the shy ones, the ones who hadn't yet found their volume.

She started at Brunswick Primary and never stopped moving.

If there was an art show to hang, Em had a plan and a spreadsheet and a tea towel over her shoulder.

If there was a school musical to wrangle, she'd have 60 kids, 30 costumes, five cardboard trees, and still find a way to make the stage look like wonder.

She did a regional teaching placement that she adored—long drives, big skies, names learned by heart, and a town that still asks after Miss O'Connor like she only stepped out for recess.

Mum—Moira—and Dad—Patrick—raised us to value inclusion, respect, and community before ego.

Em took that and sharpened it into daily practice.

Breakfast club on cold mornings, because learning starts better with toast.

Reading chairs positioned just so.

A knack for hearing the kid at the back who had a story but not yet the words.

If you ever want to understand Em, picture her late one winter night at school, the week before NAIDOC Week.

We were painting a mural with a group of students and a local artist.

Paint on the floor, sleeves, eyelashes.

Em, splattered like a Jackson Pollock, humming Missy Higgins under her breath, coaxing a nervous year four to try a bigger brush, to risk a bigger sky.

Her grin was the kind that made you feel like you'd already succeeded, you just had to see it too.

That wall still carries those brushstrokes, and I feel certain it carries some of her courage.

Em's classrooms were not just tidy—they were tuned.

She was organised the way musicians are in rhythm.

There was a place for everything: felt pens, soft landings, second chances.

And she was endlessly encouraging without ever being saccharine.

If a child read a sentence for the first time, Em didn't clap wildly—she leaned in, eyes shining, and said, "There it is. That's yours now," as if they'd found a key they could keep.

Outside school, she played Saturday netball with the verve of someone auditioning for a sports drink ad, even if her knees had their own opinions.

She hiked the Dandenongs at a clip I resented and admired in equal measure.

She could turn a "quick look" at a weekend market into an archaeological dig through vintage scarves, and somehow make friends with every stallholder.

She sang karaoke duets with me—terribly and earnestly—and never once let me take the low harmony because, in her words, "You're not getting out of this that

easy, Liv.”

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And birthdays?

You didn't get a card; you got a small artwork.

Handmade, layered, the edges pressed just right.

Her cards were the sort you kept in a drawer and rediscovered when you most needed reminding that someone saw you clearly.

Family sat at the centre of everything.

Mum and Dad, you gave her the map.

She just couldn't resist adding confetti to the legend.

She adored our boys—being their Aunty Em was a full-contact sport.

She'd show up with snacks, knee pads, a new book, and a schedule that somehow included baking, a puppet show, and a game she invented on the spot.

And Alex—thank you for loving her the way you did.

Partner, co-conspirator, calm to her cyclone.

You have been her home.

Em believed in celebrating small wins.

Not just in staff rooms or at assemblies, but on Tuesday afternoons in the corridor, or at a bus stop when a student waved from the back seat like royalty.

She made a fuss of effort, not outcome.

Kindness in action, not in theory.

If you ever got one of her pep talks, you know:

There'd be a cup of tea, a gentle post-it list of what you were already doing right,

and a plan for the next two steps, never five.

She was skilled at making mountains feel like morning walks.

Often she'd cap it off with a spontaneous idea—"Let's drive the Great Ocean Road on Saturday, I'll pack snacks."

And then you'd do it.

Salt on your face, music up, pausing at lookouts to decide which rock pool looked more like a secret.

Her students will remember the musicals and the murals.

But they will also remember the way she knelt to their eye level, the way she learned the names of their pets and grandparents, the way she slipped a note into a desk that read, "I noticed your kindness today."

Those notes became talismans.

Just like the cards that arrived for us, exactly when we needed them.

One landed in my letterbox on a day I had cried in my car at lunchtime.

Inside, in her looping script: "You have survived 100% of your hard days, scientist of your own courage."

I stuck it to my fridge.

It's still there.

We will miss her pep talks.

We will miss those impulsive road trips with bakery stops and sea spray and the inevitable detour because a lighthouse demanded a visit.

We will miss the cards, the ones where she seemed to sense the wobble before we admitted it to ourselves.

We will miss the way she elevated ordinary minutes into something you could frame.

People sometimes talk about legacy like a statue.

Em's is more like a stitched quilt.

Pieces of art class courage, breakfast club warmth, staffroom belly laughs, netball bruises, market mornings, shared songs, and kids who learned to read because someone believed they could and waited with them until they did.

It's soft enough to wrap around, sturdy enough to last.

I want to say this directly to the kids and colleagues from Brunswick Primary who are here:

Em loved working with you.

She came home with your jokes, your triumphs, and yes, your glitter in her hair.

She was particularly fierce about shy kids—the ones who stand at the edge of the line.

She knew how to beckon without dragging.
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If you carry anything of hers forward, let it be that.

Make space, tilt the room towards the quiet voice, and celebrate the small win like it's the whole show.

And to our family:

Mum, Dad, she knew your pride wasn't noisy; it was steady.

She felt it every time she called after a long day and you asked, "How did your ones go today?"

Alex, you and Em built a life that looked like two people actually listening to each other.

Thank you for that lesson.

And to my boys—your Auntie Em taught you how to clap for each other even when you're not on stage.

Keep doing that.

There's music on the playlist today from Missy Higgins and Vance Joy, because Em's life has always had a soundtrack—something you can hum while painting, or belt out with the windows down along the Surf Coast.

For anyone who wishes to honour Em's heart in a practical way, we're inviting donations to The Smith Family.

Em believed in breakfast before books, shoes that fit, and the quiet boost that changes a school day.

She'd like the idea that some kid she never met gets a fairer start because people wore bright clothes and remembered her well.

And because Em loved leaving people with something in their hands, we'll make sure a copy of this eulogy is shared—if you need it, it will be sent to cto@kuchventures.com so it doesn't get lost in the bustle.

I'd be lying if I said I haven't reached for my phone a dozen times to text her this week.

To ask which photo to frame.

To ask what to say. [Create your own personalised speech at eulogyai.com.au](https://eulogyai.com.au)

But then I remember what she always told me when I was stuck:

Start with the true thing.

The true thing is that Emily made our world kinder and louder in all the right places.

The true thing is that she did not hoard her gifts; she spent them daily, and somehow there was always more.

When I close my eyes, I see her at that mural again.

Paint under her nails.

Humming.

Cheeks flushed from the heater that never quite worked.

A child next to her, braver by the minute.

Em stepping back, tilting her head, smiling as if to say,

Look at that.

We made something.

We did, Em.

You did.

Thank you for the road trips and the phone calls and the songs off-key.

For the carefully timed cards, the brisk walks up steep hills, the glitter that never left the carpet.

For choosing community over ego, every time.

We'll keep your colour in this world.

We'll hum the harmonies you loved.

We'll cheer the small wins like they're grand finals.

And we'll keep making space at the edge of the line for the quiet kid, because you taught us how.

We love you, Emily.

Our Em.

Our spark.

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