

Zoes Tribute

Thank you for coming along today and sharing this day with Zoes family and I.

There are in fact two services today remembering Zoe and how she has been a big part of our lives.

In her hometown of Groningen in the Netherlands they are also holding a service for Zoe today and due to amazing technology this service is being streamed to them.

To Zoe's mum Sita her step father Ulco and her friends watching thank you for being part of today. I'm sorry that it had to be under these sad circumstances.

A special thanks to Ninka who has been a friend to Zoe since kindergarten and has taken the heavy load of being the contact between me and Zoe's mum and helped in setting up the service in Groningen

Zoe came into my life about 17 years ago when she and her husband Peter moved into our Parbury Gardens complex which consists of 18 villas.

Shortly after she spoke with me about joining the then Coastal patrol of which I was a member and which eventually became Marine Rescue

Over time I found out that she grew up in Groningen in the Netherlands. She often spoke of her younger years when her family went on holidays not as we usually do it here in Oz, packing the car and caravan up but on foot camping through various countries.

As you will see in the photos later on in the service her backpack was nearly bigger than her. They went to some amazing places through Europe saw beautiful countryside. Camped on Mountains and valleys in sunshine and snow

She came to Australia after an online romance with Peter Tylee who she later married. Enjoyed our beautiful country, living in various towns and traveled around. They even had a stint in South Korea teaching english to the local children. Its here where she found a love of spicy food.

Zoe and I grew close, having shared shifts at Marine Rescue and living in the same complex we eventually hooked up.

Eventually she moved in and what started off a a fling grew into a full on relationship and then love. We married in 2019.

We were different in many ways and yet soul mates in others. We enjoyed each others company, took trips both here and abroad. Our last big trip was down the Mekong River in Cambodia. This was ideal for Zoe who was suffering Chronic Fatigue as if she wasn't well enough for tours she could rest on the bed and watch the passing scenery.

Zoe had many interests and in recent times has found great satisfaction from handicrafts. Our home is full of her works, be it painting, craft work and crochet. The blanket on her coffin is one that she created. She loved colours.

She joined the local choir and loved it, if her health allowed she did yoga several times a week. Loved swimming and walks on the beach especially with Charlie our dog.

She enjoyed meeting with friends for a chat over coffee some of whom are here today.

She enjoyed Marine Rescue which became her second family. She enjoyed the challenges and the friendships it provided.

She held the rating of watch officer, senior Crew and up until her health would not allow it RWC operator.

She has a Commissioners Citation for her involvement of the retrieval of a diver from Swansea Channel and her efforts to revive him.

She held a Cert IV certificate in Training and assessing and was called on many times to conduct assessment of members going for ratings.

Up until recently she was the coordinator of our Boat Licensing course.

Her contribution to Marine Rescue and the boating community was huge.

Its great to see so many of our unit members here today. I am thankful for you being here and sharing her life with you.

To help others with Chronic Fatigue she set up an online art page for other suffers and gave them a forum to talk about this debilitating illness and help one another.

She looked forward to the Sunday night phone calls with her mum. I could hear the laughter from the study and see the smile on her face when the call had finished.

She was awesome and I loved her.

I need to address the elephant in the room and that is mental health.

Zoe did not die in a car crash or any other type of accident or natural causes. She took her own life.

Despite her outward appearance of a happy bright person she suffered mental illness and had done so since her teenage years.

She suffered anxiety, depression low esteem and a multitude of other mental issues. Due to this and the debilitating effect of Chronic fatigue it got too much and she took her own life.

This was approximately 9 hours after I had picked her up from the mental ward of a major hospital. I don't want to dwell on this too

much other to say there will be a review of her treatment by the hospital and I have asked to be part of this. In addition I hope there is a Coronary's inquest into the circumstance. Treatment should be about healing not punishment.

Go back 20 odd years ago I was one of these guys who thought mental illness was a sign of weakness and you just need to toughen up, be positive and all would be ok. I was so wrong.

Zoe wasn't weak. She fought hard. I have found a number of diaries she kept in which she exposed her battle. The diaries are quite graphic and give a insight into the battles she fought whilst maintaining a cheerful image.

We hear all the messages about recognising mental issues, The R U OK message , the titles that come across our TV screens when its news about a suicide. The message is if you are dealing with issues contact someone. Zoe did all that.

When it was becoming too much for her she reached out and sought help. She self admitted herself into hospital on a number of occasions and also sought treatment from private health professionals.

I saw a post the other day which resonated with me and I hope that those dealing with mental health find it useful

Its not weak to ask for help its a sign of strength and courage.

There needs to be a better system dealing with mental health issues, the current one failed Zoe and others like her.

For me its was like living with a ticking time bomb waiting for someone to defuse it.

Unfortunately for Zoe and I it didn't happen.

I miss her

I miss her laughter, her weird sense of humour, the way she distracts me by shoving her finger in my ear or better still when she lifts her shirt and flashes her boobs.

I miss our early morning ritual of coffee in bed , reading the news having a cuddle and if Im lucky kicking the dog out of the room and having more 'cuddles.'

I miss her reorganising the bed sheets, pulling the blankets off me to cover her.

I miss her snoring which she would never admit to.

I miss it when she farts and blames the dog

I miss our walks along the beach with Charlie

I miss my fiend and lover

The painting on show here today is one that Zoe painted about three months ago.

She called it Hope

My hope is that you remember Zoe for all the joy, fun and love that she had and shared.

My hope is that those who suffer the heartache of mental illness find help and a way of dealing with this terrible illness.

My hope is those who are charged with helping those with mental health, listen and treat them with compassion.

My hope is that your life is richer for having Zoe in it. I know my life is.

Love you babe

Thank you

