



Kerry Arthur Cattell

22/03/1946 - 16/04/2025

Good Morning, everyone.

Before I begin, this Australian slouch hat is dressed for Kerry's Service. Unlike the hat you see on Kerry's casket, this one has the brim down. This can be thought of as signifying the going down of the Sun on Kerry's life. The chin strap has been reversed, which is a military tradition following the death of Major General Bridges at Gallipoli 110 years ago. Three days ago, this hat wore the badge of the University of NSW Regiment – part of my own past. Today it carries the badge of the Australian Army Intelligence Corps and I wear it in recognition of Kerry's Service, and the service of all those who served both before and after him.

Now, on with business.

Thank you for being here today to celebrate the life of Kerry Arthur Cattell — a man who touched the lives of so many. We are gathered not just in our collective grief, but in deep gratitude for the time we were lucky enough to share with him.

My name has already been shared with you. I happen to be the eldest of the Cattell cousins, and am very humbled to have the opportunity to share just some of Kerry's life story. Whilst this man was my Uncle Kerry, he was never just that—he was simply, unmistakably, Kerry.

For those here who may know just some of my life story – my father died when I was quite young. In my life there have been two men who stand out as having behaved as Dad's. One of those two men was Kerry, and he started behaving like a "Dad" almost as soon as he returned from Vietnam. We'll speak to his Service a little later. You may have heard something like "it's easy to be a father – much harder to be a Dad". Kerry Cattell was more than a father to his own children – he was a Dad to all - he was a guiding presence to many.

So, let's begin with the more formal part of Kerry's story.

The question is where to begin – and it is a reasonable to maybe begin at the beginning.

Kerry Arthur Cattell was born on the 22nd of March 1946 in Maitland, NSW. He was the second child of Robert Arthur Cattell and Gwendoline Florence Anne Martin. Kerry had one elder sister at the time of his birth. That would be my mother, Carol. Kerry was then to find himself with more sisters (Janis and Anne) – and finally my grandparents decided to provide Kerry with a baby brother, and that would be Noel. All of Kerry's siblings remain with us and we are grateful they are all here today.

Obviously, my knowledge of Kerry's early life comes from family stories and some very "old" friends.

Kerry commenced his schooling at Newcastle East Public School. He did pretty well and was selected to later attend Newcastle Boys High School. One thing you are likely to find out about Kerry is he couldn't hang on to acquaintances – they almost always became friends. It was no different when he was at School. For all of my life I would hear Kerry speak about Graeme Barret or Neil Oldham. These three met when they were about twelve years old – and they were lifelong friends. Kerry ended up with oh so many of those.

Kerry also spent a lot of time with his maternal grandfather (who was known affectionately as Poppy Martin) at his home at Phegans Bay on the Central Coast of NSW. It would not be uncommon to find Kerry and Poppy Martin both in his wooden row boat, pulling it across to Woy Woy. I have stood at the jetty below that old house at Phegans Bay and looked out toward Woy Woy – it seemed like a long way to me. Much, much later in life Kerry and Vicki would build a home here in Cronulla and Kerry bought a sea kayak. What for? To paddle it across the bay to Bundeena. That too, looks a long way to me....

In 1961 Kerry's parents were to travel the world on the Queen Mary. As they were going to be away for some time, boarding at Cranbrook was where he found himself. Kerry spoke positively of his time at Cranbrook. One story he would often tell me was the time when my father Geoff came to pick him up from Cranbrook for a day out. Kerry always described the car that arrived as some sort of "royal saloon" that my father had built with some mates. All the boys "hooted and hollered" because Geoff got out of the car and came and opened the rear passenger side door for Kerry to get in. Apparently, they drove around the corner and Kerry then jumped in the front seat for a day at the races.

When it came time to leave Kerry said it took them forever to get to the car. There were hundreds of people looking over the vehicle – probably waiting to see what dignitary of the day turned up? Anyway, up walks a teenage Kerry, and a twenty-something, who just jump in the car and drive off. Kerry was recounting this story again only a few months ago – he added that it looked like there were a lot of disappointed people staring at them as they drove off. Remember, Kerry was about fifteen (15) at the time....

When Kerry left Cranbrook he found himself returning to Newcastle and commenced a metallurgical traineeship with Goninan's. This was one of the foremost engineering firms in Newcastle, and Kerry would speak about the walks across Tighes Hill TAFE to the Edgeworth David building, which is where they taught Metallurgy. Little could anyone know that almost twenty years later I would be taking the same walk, to the same building and, maybe sitting in the same classroom – who knows, even the same seat? This was not the first time I had walked in Kerry's footsteps. I certainly did not leave with the same results.

Kerry eventually relocated to Sydney and commenced employment at Thompson Scoogle – another foundry, and he continued his study of metallurgy at night.

It was whilst he was working at Thompson Scoogle that an event occurred that would be forever life changing for Kerry, and for so many of his generation. Kerry won the lottery. This

was not the lottery most of us want to win. This was the National Service lottery and every Australian male had to register for it on their 20th birthday. They would spin a barrel and literally pick a birthday. The Government actually televised these lotteries in the interest of transparency. Just imagine the tens of thousands of families crammed around black and white TV sets praying their son's birthday did not get drawn. Kerry had turned twenty in the March. In 1966 Kerry's number came up. I am selfishly going to claim that somebody somewhere was looking after Kerry. '66 and '67 were pretty hectic years in Vietnam for Australian soldiers – the battle of Long Tan was in August of '66. Remember, Kerry was still studying Metallurgy and working at Scoogles. The National Service Act allowed for your military service to be deferred until you completed your studies – or failed. Kerry did not fail. He went on to complete a Diploma in Metallurgy and then, guess what? To the Green did Kerry go.

Kerry completed his basic training at Lone Pine Barracks in Singleton, and I have a memory of a taxi pulling up down the street and a scrawny guy wearing "greens" getting out of said taxi with an army bag thrown over the shoulder. I did not recognise him at first as this guy had no hair (I would have been maybe seven). Standard military buzz cut. Here's those footsteps again. About nine years later I would receive the same haircut, and end up qualified on the same weapon systems. Kerry and I were only talking about this recently. I happened to be reflecting on my skill with a Browning. Now the Browning is a 9mm pistol. I was telling Kerry that when I was firing the Browning I was more accurate when I threw the thing. After we both stopped laughing, Kerry confessed that he was the same. The difference was if Kerry ever had to rely upon a Browning he'd be in a bit of strife.

Kerry then continued his training at the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra (Queensland). He reminded me recently of his time there. It was pretty short – only three weeks; then off to Vietnam. Whilst at Canungra they were setting up a defensive position. The boys had put out the sentry's, dug a hole for the guy with the M60 to have a good field of fire, and then worked out the roster for sleep. Kerry and a few of the guys had laid out their hoochies to get some well needed rest – and they could hear something shuffling about. It wasn't any of them. After a bit of investigation, it was determined that they'd spent quite some time defending a nest of Death Adder snakes. All military discipline suddenly seemed unimportant. Kerry told me the platoon commander (a young lieutenant) led the way as they left their position. They were not walking....and the M60 stayed in the hole.

Kerry's service in Vietnam was one of those fixed points in time. There was life before Vietnam and there was life after Vietnam. Like so many Australian soldiers they went to Vietnam as young bullet-proof men – and soon learned that was actually not the case; and mortality was a constant thought. One time, almost twenty years ago, Kerry shared with me his thoughts as to why so many Vietnam Veterans struggled. He said "we went up there as boys, and then had lifetimes of experiences crammed into a year – it was just all too much at once". Kerry summed it up perfectly. Peers of mine have written extensively on this stuff, as have I. I believe Kerry's summary is more to the point than all of our collective "psycho-babble".

I would just like to share one story with you which Kerry would often recount. He had arrived in country 25th November 1970. He had not been in Vietnam long (literally days) when the OC ordered that all personnel were to write letters home for Christmas. There was a little bit of pushback as some guys were not really letter writers, and others had recently sent letters anyway. The OC remained insistent, and the letters were written. No 9 Squadron (RAAF) was tasked with getting this critical mail through to Vung Tao in order that it find its way to our letterboxes before Christmas 1970. So, Kerry wrote his letter and off it went in the Huey.

Now Kerry loved singing a certain song in those years. This song was called “My Boomerang Won't Come Back” – made famous by a guy called Charlie Drake in '62. Well, that Huey helicopter was a boomerang – except this one came back. Kerry described it to me like a scene in that TV series MASH. You may recall where the choppers come over the hill with the wounded strapped to every spare surface.

Kerry shared with me that it was a Saturday afternoon. He had returned to Nui Dat for the weekly debrief with the OC, and then they would retire to the boozier for the evening. On this afternoon they heard a helicopter and it wasn't scheduled. So, there were a lot of people looking toward the hills that this chopper would come in from. When they did see it, it seemed to be actually reflecting the Sun. Now, I would have thought that's not a very smart move to have an aircraft so visible to the enemy. Clearly, some “knife and forker”, otherwise known as an Officer, had done a risk assessment and determined the juice was worth the squeeze. As this helicopter came closer to the landing pad there were cheers all around. Why? Every spare spot on that helicopter was loaded with extra kegs of beer for Christmas..

Maybe something uniquely Australian? I don't know. What I do know is for many decades now Kerry and I would discuss corporate leadership of all types. Kerry learnt the fundamentals of exceptional leadership in the crucible of war – and it never left him.

Kerry returned from Vietnam on the 7th October 1971. He did so quietly. So did the Govt of the day. The Qantas aircraft was taxied behind a hanger so it couldn't be seen – even though it was after 11:00pm. They handed in their SLR's etc to an armourer at the airport, changed into civvies, and were literally told to “get lost”. Kerry did not tell his family he was back. He went and spent a week or so with some friends at Potts Point and then, after a while, put his Pollies back on and fronted up at the transport clerk, to get his free trip home to Coolangatta. He just got off the plane and walked home – it was a long walk. Kerry literally walked in the front door and said “Hi mum, I'm home”. Just like he'd been up the street to buy bread. Even now I can't imagine that happening. I think it's fair to say we Cattell cousins were lucky to still have a Grandmother for so long, after she had a shock like that.

Kerry was now back from Vietnam. Had a few dollars in the bank although was definitely unemployed. He did not really know what he wanted to do. The world seemed so surreal. He'd spent weeks just walking through shops in Sydney – just to try and acclimate to being back home. Didn't buy anything. He has said that when he was back at Coolangatta he would sleep in the back bedroom – which was Noels room. Kerry must have had the bed under the window. You literally had to stand on the bed, on your toes, to see out of that window. He would be unable to sleep and just stand on his toes staring out the window.

Eventually Kerry decided he needed a job, so he chose to ring his old employer at Seven Hills in Sydney (Scoogles). What Kerry did not know is that the Technical Manager at Scoogles was waiting for his call. Apparently BorgWarner (who owned Scoogles) had been constructing an enormous advanced foundry and it was getting near to completion. The Production Manager at the time was having some difficulty with one of the processes and when he raised the issue with the technical department the Technical Manager told him not to worry about it. He just kept saying “Kerry's due back soon”. John Powell tells me that he was left wondering who “was this guy with sunshine coming out of his”. Anyway, one day this young twenty-something guy taps him on the shoulder and says “G'day, I'm Kerry”. This would have been early 1972 and they have been lifelong friends forever.

Kerry was finally back in the “real world”, so he decided to buy a unit. This was in MacBurnie Street, Cabramatta. Now, Kerry's unique sense of humour was well known. Others have all sorts of definitions for that sense of humour – but it was always there. Even up to his last

moments with us Kerry's sense of humour remained intact. Oftentimes, he might have been the only one in the room who "got it". He'd be laughing and the rest of us would be catching up. I recall one time we were visiting Kerry at Cabramatta and it was breakfast time. Someone had cooked boiled eggs for breakfast. I expect it was my mother as the best I'd seen Kerry put together was a cheese sandwich. Anyway, he decided to tell my sister, Libby, that when he was a child the family was so poor that they not only ate the egg, they had to eat the shell as well. He proceeded to break up one of the consumed egg shells. I actually can't recall whether Libby consumed the shell.

Around this time Kerry could also regularly be seen hooning around Cabramatta in his dark green soft top MG-B. He had also bought a cream hard top MG-A which sat under a car cover down the back. Kerry told, me more than once, that when I got my driver's license the car would be mine.

Toward the end of '73 Kerry looked around the Scoogle's management structure and decided there was no future for him there. He was already the Plant Metallurgist and there were only two rungs on the ladder above him – and they were filled. At this pivotal point in his life, Kerry made a career-defining move—he joined Foseco in Padstow.

Kerry had left a role at Scoogles that was highly technical in the application of metallurgy to the foundry process itself. He then found himself at Foseco in a technical role that had a key focus on producing consumables for that same industry. They did not pour metals at Foseco, they made the stuff you pour metals into. That somewhat simple description tells you how poorly I did in the metallurgical world.

It was also when Kerry was at Foseco he had another watershed moment in life. He met a young lady called Rhonda Taylor. They obviously hit it off pretty well, because a little over twelve months after Kerry arrived at Foseco, Kerry and Rhonda married. That was a bitter-sweet moment for me. Remember the cream MG-A in the carport. Well, it disappeared one day. My future sports car was driving around in the form of an engagement ring on Rhonda's left hand.

Kerry and Rhonda had three sons together. Nathan arriving in 1976, Joshua late '77 and the last of the bunch, Adam in '79.

Not long after Adam turned up the Cattell family went to Foseco's Head Office in Tamworth. That's the UK one. In the quite short time that Kerry was at Tamworth he again made friends that have literally lasted a lifetime.

As seems to be so often the case in our Country, Kerry and Rhonda's marriage fell over and he became single again – although now he also had three sons.

Kerry left the UK and returned to Padstow in a Senior Product Manager role and he did something that was uniquely Kerry. On his first day back as he walked through the car park he noted that a lot of the guys were driving cars that were not "made in Australia". At some stage Kerry called a meeting for his people. On the agenda was the fact that Foseco Australia was travelling to some big customers, making the case to buy foundry supplies that were manufactured in Australia. Kerry thought it was not a "good look" to turn up in an imported vehicle. My understanding is Kerry suggested re-arranging their leases to change over to something that was "Australian made".

After his divorce Kerry remained single for quite some time. He was invested in his career at Foseco and he seemed to be "going places". At some point he became the "boss" of Foseco Australia. He immediately commenced a process of cultural transformation. That's what we

call it in my World. In his – it was just being Kerry. For a start he rarely entered the building through the front door. He would always go via the production area, and chat to the guys on the way through. He removed the requirement to wear neck ties. He commenced the service recognition program. Anybody who visited Foseco would enter through the front door and be met by Isabel. Behind her was a wall of dozens of brass plaques. Each one of these had a name on it. There was no plaque on that wall of less than ten years – many were twenty-five+. Foseco people have told me that Kerry was the driving force behind the very real sense of “family” that became the Foseco culture.

During those years I don't recall Kerry ever bringing anyone home to meet the family.

That is until he met Vicki Townsend. Kerry did not just meet Vicki, he also met two gorgeous little girls – Julia and Emma. It was destined to be, that Kerry and Vicki would marry and they did so on 9th November 1992. On that day Kerry not only gained a wife – he gained a couple of daughters. He never thought of Julia or Emma in any other way. If you recall an earlier sentiment; Kerry was not their father – but Kerry was certainly their Dad. Kerry Cattell actually had five children – although he was Dad-like to so many more.

Nothing was more important to Kerry than being a Dad, Grandad, and Great-Grandad. Well actually there was one thing. This was his marriage to Vicki. In military terms, we talk about having a “safe harbour”. This is somewhere where you feel protected, can recharge, and get ready to go out to battle the world again. So, in times of crisis, a safe harbour provides a true place of refuge. Without a shadow of doubt ,Vicki was Kerry's “safe harbour”. No matter what was going on in his world - and at times there was a lot and Kerry would become anxious and sometimes distressed – he was able to return to that safe harbour which they shared together.

Kerry and Vicki were married for over thirty-two years. In that time, they travelled the World together. Both as part of Kerry's global role with Foseco, and also many times during retirement. If you would ask Kerry where was he the happiest in the World, his answer would be surprisingly quick. It was not drinking expensive red wine in the Eifel Tower. It was not going on game drives at Bakubung in South Africa. It was not experiencing the hustle and bustle of Shanghai. It was not skiing in the French Alps (and he was a pretty good skier). It was none of these places. Kerry would say that he was most happy sitting somewhere on Lord Howe island with Vicki.

Beyond all his achievements, and there were many many more that I have not shared today, Kerry was deeply human. He was a man of great principle. A quiet listener. An extremely sharp thinker, and someone who always made time for those who needed him. He led, not by command, but by example. And he did so with that unique Kerry humour, wisdom, and genuine kindness.

Kerry's final eighteen months of life were pretty tough. He experienced ongoing challenges associated with his heart and was diagnosed with Lung Cancer. He went through the treatments of Radiotherapy and Chemotherapy and we actually thought it had been beaten. It had not, and that evil disease was located again only ten days before his passing. On top of all this Kerry experienced a Stroke a little over four (4) weeks ago – which took his eyesight. It took nothing else. Kerry remained as sharp as ever and as I have said he even still had that Kerry humour. He also knew that his time with us was at an end. Kerry seemed far more accepting of that outcome than any of the rest of us.

Kerry passed away a little after 10:00am on the 16th April 2025. For the days prior to his loss, he was never alone. On the day of his passing, he was surrounded by all of his children, a

few grandchildren and, of course, Vicki never left his side. In fact, Kerry's last experience in this World was being hugged by Vicki.

Truly, when my time comes I can only pray it is one so surrounded by the heartfelt love that was so powerfully present that day.

Kerry Arthur Cattell lived a fuller life than most. He lived. He loved.....and he was so clearly loved by so many.

The grief that Kerry's family and friends are experiencing feels beyond measure. We know that the days shall be dark for some time. The days will never be the same without his sharing presence. Nonetheless, if we can manage to demonstrate just a small measure of the resilience that Kerry showed, we will get there in the end.

Let us honour Kerry, not only with the words shared today, but with the way we carry his memory forward: with strength, with compassion, and with the same grace that he offered the world. If we can do that, then he remains with us – and that thought gives me great comfort.

So does the thought of Kerry arriving on Lord Howe Island and finding his way to a high point where he can surveil all that is below. Vicki is sitting there by his side. As the Sun is going down he has to lift his slouch hat up to his eyes so he can make out the movements below. What he is seeing is all of his family, and others that he holds dear, just having a good time together. After some moments of quiet reflection, he places that well-worn slouch hat on the ground - looks toward Vicki and says "A Life Well Met – Thankyou"