



Dear Dad,

It's been four years now since we lost you. I've been thinking a lot about how we used to plan for my future. All the advice you gave me for the experiences I might have. And your hopes for what I could achieve.

Now, I'm a high school graduate. The future we imagined together is becoming a reality. I know you would have been so excited for me. But it's in these moments that I miss you the most.

There is so much I wish I could share with you from the last four years. Recently, mum, Sarah and I shared your story with Karuna. We definitely shed some tears in the process. But you would be so proud of us for being brave. We are helping other families access the same love and care from Karuna that you valued so much.

The first question the Karuna team asked me was: How would you describe your dad? It was a simple one for me to answer. *My dad was a brilliant man*, I told them.

And then I thought about it some more. I wondered how I would describe you to a stranger. Someone who never had the privilege of loving you like we did.

I would tell them that you were kind. You were a big softie at heart. The dad who watched Disney movies even when the kids weren't home.

I would tell them that you were generous with your love. I always knew you cared. You were a listening ear for me whenever I needed it. And you always made time for our family.

I would tell them that you worked hard. But you knew how to play hard as well. One of my favourite memories is from our family trip to SeaWorld. You acted like a big kid. Running around the park shooting water guns at me and Sarah. We loved that you always wanted to have fun with us.

I would tell them that you prepared us for your death as best as you could. One of the equally beautiful and sad parts of palliative care, is that it gave us a little more time to be at home with you. **But nothing could have truly prepared me for losing you.**

I remember how mum would help us during the days when we felt overwhelmed. We would sit down together and make lists. 10 things we were struggling with, 10 things we were grateful for, and 10 goals for the future.

We would then work through our lists together. Sometimes, we would all talk through our feelings as a family. We would meditate. Or create positive affirmations. Other times, Sarah and I would have one-on-one time with mum. She always let us keep our letters private if we wanted to. Sometimes, I kept my letters just between you and me.

Throughout everything, Karuna was and continues to be a great comfort to our family. You were always trying to be strong for us. And sometimes, that meant you weren't willing to open up about how you were feeling. But the Karuna team were so good at meeting you where you needed it most. I'm glad they could provide you with the same support you always gave to us. **It takes the most beautiful, selfless soul to be there for people during their hardest moments and continuously treat them with love and respect.**

Mum and I also attended Karuna's Annual Memorial Service earlier this year. I'm grateful that we had the opportunity to honour you alongside some of the people that provided your end-of-life care. They are a part of our family now. I know we will always share admiration and respect for the Karuna team and the process we went through together.

It was touching to see all the other Karuna families in attendance on the night. Some of them had lost their loved ones only recently. And for others, it had been many years. We had all experienced loss in some way. But we had all been brought together by Karuna. By the warmth, love, and kindness they show to every family facing a terminal diagnosis. **I hope that by sharing your story, we can help those families. As well as any families who may need Karuna in the future.**

Dad, you are never far from my thoughts. I often wonder what your perspective would be for all the little and big moments in my life. Like learning how to drive. Or my 18th birthday earlier this year.

I still love to read the cards you wrote for me before your passing. They bring me comfort and help me feel close to you. And time has proved that you always have the best advice, for every situation.

You taught me to show respect for everyone. How to work hard, and remain humble. You made me laugh until my stomach hurt. And you gave me a lifetime of insight and wisdom in the time we spent together.

When someone praises my work ethic, it makes me feel proud. Not just because they're recognising the hard work I've been putting in. But because you were the person who taught me to strive for my goals. **I feel so proud that people recognise a beautiful part of you in me.**

I'm currently preparing to leave home for the first time. I've been accepted into a dream role with the Australian Defence Force. You would have been thrilled for me. And I want you to know that for this next stage of my life. As well as everything that comes after. **I will always carry you close to my heart.**

Aroha nui,
Ryan



Your donation will support families like Ryan, Melissa, Ivan, and Sarah through illness, palliative care, and grief and loss.

Thank you for supporting Karuna this holiday season.