

#old is beautiful



# MOUNT GLORIOUS

Older Riders share wisdom on gender, ageing and beauty

# Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Kabi Kabi,  
Jinibara and Turrbal peoples,  
the Traditional Owners of Mount Glorious.

We recognise their continuing connection  
to land, waters and culture.

We pay our respects to Elders  
past, present and emerging.

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### **Project partners**

The Old is Beautiful, Mount Glorious project was hosted by ADA Australia and facilitated by Celebrate Ageing Ltd

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The #OldisBeautiful project is an initiative of Celebrate Ageing Ltd.

Special thanks also to photographer Jade Ellis for the stunning portraits <https://www.jadeellisphotography.com/>

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### **More info on #OldisBeautiful**

[www.celebrateageing.com/beautiful.html](http://www.celebrateageing.com/beautiful.html)

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# Foreword

**Geoff Rowe** CEO ADA Australia

The Old is Beautiful, Mount Glorious project emerged from concerning evidence about the wellbeing of older men. Research shows men 85+ have the highest suicide rates in Australia, three times the national average.<sup>1</sup> This figure has been attributed to the losses facing this group, as well as isolation, loneliness and feelings of worthlessness.

Many of the psychological issues experienced by older men are driven by ageism; and compounded by the reluctance of many older men to express their feelings, or be vulnerable.<sup>2</sup> Masculine norms such as stoicism and self-reliance<sup>3</sup> can make older men less able to cope with losses,<sup>4</sup> less likely to talk about their issues when they aren't coping, less likely to seek help, and at greater risk of suicide.<sup>5</sup> In response, there are calls to explore peer led initiatives to support older men.<sup>6</sup>

The Old is Beautiful, Mount Glorious project aimed to explore older men's perspectives on ageism and gender, and to identify ways to support older men 'doing it tough'. The decision to host a gathering on Mount Glorious reflected an opportunity to work with the hundreds of motor bike riders, mostly male, who make their way up the Mountain roads every week. The Mountain has a population of 343 and a Café that is the meeting place for riders. There is great comradery amongst the riders – and this presented

an opportunity to explore what could be done to support older men, and how older men could better support each other.

A flyer outlining the project was posted in the Mount Glorious Café, and 11 riders participated, including 10 men and one woman.

Participants met in the Café to discuss the experiences of ageing and ageism, childhood lessons about gender – and whether these lessons are still useful. We also asked participants to share a message to a 'mate doing it tough'. Follow up phone interviews documented participant's individual responses to the topics discussed in the Café meeting.

This document shares participant's photo portraits and their stories. It represents an important first step in supporting older men, and recognising the gendered experience of ageing, ageism and Elder Abuse.<sup>7</sup>

As the CEO of ADA Australia, Queensland's aged care advocacy service, I see these stories as critically important to understanding the ageism driving the Elder Abuse that effects around 150,000+ older Queenslanders every year. The stories also provide valuable insights into ageism and suicide risk for older men – and the need for a gender lens in our approaches to supporting older people.



**Geoff Rowe**  
CEO ADA Australia

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/causes-death-australia/latest-release#intentional-self-harm-deaths-suicide-in-australia>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www1.racgp.org.au/newsgp/clinical/suicide-rates-reveal-the-silent-suffering-of-austr>

<sup>3</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2760513>

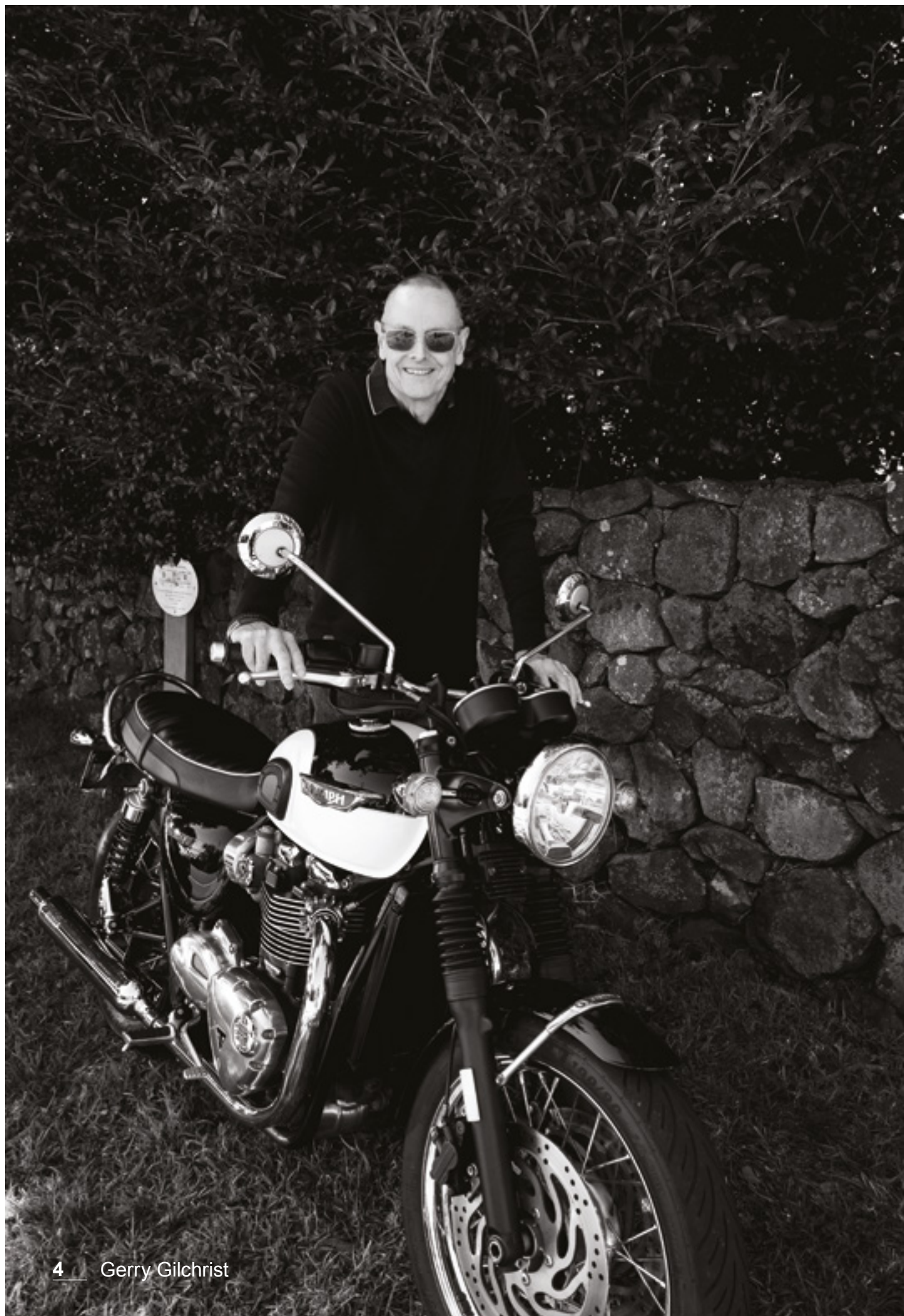
<sup>4</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/1579988/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www1.racgp.org.au/newsgp/clinical/suicide-rates-reveal-the-silent-suffering-of-austr>

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.emboldenfestival.com/uploads/1/5/3/9/15399992/genderlenselements.pdf>





# Gerry Gilchrist

When I am on my bike, it's time out. It's me time. It's one of the many things I look forward to doing. I'm Vice President of the Queensland Triumph Riders group. Over the last 10 years this has given me a whole new friendship group and, with new members joining all the time, we meet a lot of interesting people. We meet to ride or for coffee or meals, and some of us play guitar together. Others find other interests in common. It's important at this age that you don't sit around by yourself. It's important to get out and connect with other people. Sometimes people have things happen in their life that are difficult, it's not their fault but they can feel overwhelmed if they don't talk about it or share it with someone else.

I got my first motor bike when I was 16. I rode for 14 years until our son was born, and we needed two cars. So, there were no motor bikes for most of my working life. When I neared retirement, I got myself a Triumph motor bike and when riding I feel like I am 16 again.

In some ways it's different riding now. The helmets are more sterile, it's quieter riding, but there is more traffic on the road and a larger percentage of bad drivers. I am always looking out for hazards. It's good for the brain to be more aware. I worked as a heavy vehicle driver trainer, and I would tell new drivers that if they expect everyone else on the road to do the wrong thing, they will never be disappointed.

Yesterday 9 of us rode 270 kms, through five towns. I was lead rider and a good friend looked after the tail ending, to ensure no-one got lost. After lunch

everyone was going their separate ways. Two of us decided the day was young, and we still had time to ride into the city to listen to a couple of bands.

My ageing has been okay, but I had a little 'stop and think moment' when I was faced with some cardiac issues. I've been a marathon runner and ironman triathlete and when I bought an Apple Watch, it told me I had atrial fibrillation. I would never have known otherwise and could have fallen victim to the significant associated stroke risk. My doctor started me on medication immediately and ultimately a cardiac ablation procedure was carried out to get my heart rhythm back on track. Now I get my exercise and endorphins from walking swimming and riding the motor bike. I don't need to run to push my heart rate up to get the endorphins.

I'm happy to take the necessary tablets for my heart so I can still be here for my family and my grandchildren. You think you are bullet proof when you are younger, but when you are older you need to be careful.

It's different being a man today than when I was younger. I think it is more emotional. When I look in the mirror, I see my dad as an older man, but I still feel 16. What does that mean? It's a different world for men now.

When I was a kid, we used to go to the movies and see the cigarette advertisements for Marlboro Man. He was a handsome man who smoked, and he would get all the girls. We thought that was what being a man was. So, we all smoked.

# **My message to a mate doing it tough is, don't be afraid to tell people what is really going on. It's okay to talk about it. It can help.**

**Gerry Gilchrist**

I grew up in a small town. You would walk down the street, and someone would pick a fight with you. That's how you proved you were a man, I guess. When I was 18, I went to work in the Mount Isa mines for 18 months. Mt Isa had 30,000 people at the time. Mt Isa was tough in a different way. I think it's where I grew up. There were 35 different nationalities working at the mine. It woke me up that the world was bigger and far more interesting than my hometown.

When I was younger, the whole thing about being a man was to just get on with it. When something bad or difficult happened – we were taught to just get on with it. You didn't let it affect you or show that it affected you.

My grandfather was injured in France in World War 1 and when he came back, he wouldn't talk about it. He died before I was born, but my parents would never speak about his experiences. I believe he never spoke about it either. Perhaps it was too horrific for him and so he didn't want to share/relive it. I would see other men in town who had also returned from the Wars, and they were really struggling with trauma/PTSD. We used to call it shell shock then.

I found out in later life that when something bad happens – it's okay to cry.

Part of that realisation came from having my own children, helping them through difficult times and telling them it's okay to cry.

Men of my generation weren't encouraged to show our emotions. I didn't want that for my kids. But I don't like it when they cry, it makes me feel sad for them.

We live in a different world now for gender. We recently went to our nieces wedding, and it was our first gay wedding. It was great, mainly because she was so happy. Her brother died at 30 from a heart condition, he was transitioning gender, and so was his partner. My niece's brother's partner gave her away; it was wonderful to see them all happy. Everybody deserves to be happy. If you got to change your gender to do it, so be it. This is the world we live in.

I don't experience a lot of ageism. When I do its mostly people are having a crack in jest. Although recently I went to see the band The Dead South wearing my peaky blinders style cap and a woman came and asked about my hat and how old I was. She then commented that it was great to see me out enjoying myself at my age! That was definitely ageist, but it won't stop me going to concerts.

When my friend's dad retired, his focus was on gardening and watching Wheel of Fortune on the tele. That's not enough for me. When people ask me what I am doing since I retired, I tell them all those things I dreamed about doing while I was working.



So many people ask me how my retirement is going. Before I can answer they tell me they couldn't do it, because they couldn't sit around all day. They want to know what I do all day. I tell them to think about what they do on the weekend and then I tell them I'm doing that every day of the week. Thankfully I've been retired six years now and they are asking a little less often.

I have a positive approach to life. My brother and many earlier family members have battled with depression. I believe if I avoid negative thinking, I'll avoid depression. I had an uncle that was institutionalised for most of his life with a mental illness, but again that was one of the things the family didn't talk about. Their experiences have made me more aware I need to always work on the positive.

The best part of ageing is being in retirement. We are so lucky both our children live in Brisbane, so we get grandchildren time. They are one of the best things about ageing. My mate who I've known for 60 years says that grandchildren are the only thing in life that is not overrated.

I think beautiful is a feeling. It is not an appearance. Beautiful is the unconditional love of a grandchild and feeling good about yourself, no matter what you look like. I am happy with my wrinkles and my grey hair. Beautiful is what it feels like to be alive. A beautiful day, sunshine and a life well lived.

If I was to say what makes me beautiful it wouldn't be my ageing tattoos or love handles. I don't think of myself as beautiful. I am clean shaved and well dressed. One of the nicest things you

can do is be kind to each other. I try to be. Maybe that makes me beautiful. I think the fashion and beauty industry define beautiful as being a younger woman. I see older woman as beautiful as well.

My message to younger or older men who are doing it tough is, don't be afraid to ask for help. Everyone has something happening in their life.

When I was working, I was in the waste industry, working with tough garbos. When bad things happened in their lives, we would invite them to have counselling through employee assistance programs. There was always stigma and resistance to talking to someone about what they or family members were experiencing. I used to tell them that a counsellor is not looking to find out if you are crazy, they are going to give you tools to help you with what you are experiencing. We had some positive results. Some of the men couldn't get over how good it was to talk to a professional and realise they weren't alone.

Sometimes people have things happen in their life that are difficult, it's not their fault but they can feel overwhelmed if they don't talk about it or share it with someone else.

I would say to other men, 100% it's useful to talk to people about what you are experiencing. You can't keep it to yourself. You've got to get over the stigma that holds you back. Don't be afraid to ask for help. I know there is stigma. I know people ask sometimes for R U OK day – but some men say yes, they are okay, when they are not. Don't be afraid to tell people what is really going on. It's okay to talk about it. It can help.



# Shane Dunseath

Riding my bike is freedom. It's good to get out there, it clears my head. I am off work at the moment, from an incident at work. I call being on my bike 'wind therapy.' When I ride, I take in the scenery and the sounds.

I am a member of the Triumph club and its absolutely brilliant. I also go riding with other men. It's exhilarating to be on the bike. Everyone is friendly. We have a cuppa and a bite to eat at the café on Mount Glorious – the people that run the café are really good.

The thing that can be hard about ageing is that sometimes we get stereotyped. I am a train driving instructor and when I tell people I've been in the job for a long time, I get a reaction that they think I am old and ingrained and stuck. They don't understand that we have had to evolve and change to have been in this job for as long as we have.

Ageing can be physically hard. I find I have slowed down a bit. I feel a few more aches and pains. I think to age well you have got to keep moving. You have to keep an interest. There are some people I know who are passing after they retire, because they have nothing to interest them. They sit at home and do nothing. They don't have anything outside of work. They are just sitting at home in the lounge drinking themselves to death. That doesn't appeal to me. I think we need to have an active mind and an active body.

I talk to my work colleagues a lot, even though I am off work. They keep me informed and up to date. Sometimes it annoys my partner, but while I am off work it gives me a sense of – I'm not forgotten. Sometimes I go on the rides up the mountain with people from work, but we don't talk about work.

When I was growing up, I was taught it was a man's job to be the bread winner and to bring things into the house. The man was the main bread winner. That has all changed. I am now training women as train drivers, and they are as capable as men and some even more so. But I know some ladies don't get paid the same as men for doing the same work. I know some women who are retiring at 60 haven't got as much superannuation as men, and they have been in the job as long as the men.

I have daughters and a granddaughter, and so I think gender equality is paramount these days.

When I was growing up, we were taught don't show your emotions, don't cry in front of everyone. Over the last years, with what I have been going through, I know that is bullshit! You can't bottle it up. It has to come out somehow. It will come out in anger, or you will lose it one day. What I have been through changed that view for me. I now know it's not okay to bottle up our emotions.

**What I would say to a mate doing it tough, don't be a dickhead. Seek the help you need. Talk to a mate. Talk to a professional, like your GP or a psychologist or psychiatrist. Talk to someone – because you need to. Telling people is like releasing the pressure. It's not weak to speak. Be kind to yourself. Don't be a tool. Get help. Get a mental health check up.**

**Shane Dunseath**



These days for men - we have to go with the flow. We have to accept the way things are in society, and we have to adapt to the things going on around us.

I like to think I know right from wrong. I am a good judge of character. If anyone wants a hand with anything - I am there to offer them a hand. Our kids and our grandchildren come first. I worry about some things, but I know there are things that are out of my control and so I just have to let them go.

I have become a bit more understanding of the people around me. I have had to evolve and change. Sometimes change is good.

I think beautiful is not skin deep. I know people that are good looking and have a soul black as hell. Beautiful shouldn't be skin deep. Beautiful can be mind, wisdom and knowledge. It isn't all about the body. A woman that has a scar from Caesarean or stretch marks, should not be criticised for that. Those scars tell a story. They tell the story that she gave birth. She gave life to another human being. I am not saying I have never done that myself, I am just saying we are all different and now I know it is important.

Some people say my eyes are beautiful. I have beautiful blue eyes. My partner calls them my baby blues. I just try to be if someone asks for a hand I will give them a hand. I think I am approachable.

In the past, on RU OKAY Day and other days promoting mental health – if someone asked me if I was okay, I would say I was good. But inside I wasn't good. Up until I met my partner and I had an incident at work - I was a bottler.

I am not going to work at the moment. I am still under a psychologist and psychiatrist to help me get back to work. When I went to my first psychologist I had to tell her a lot of stuff. I felt comfortable telling her because she was a complete stranger. She didn't judge me. It was helpful. I was nervous when I went in, and when I came out, I was so relieved.

I have a few mates that are into promoting mental health and they are teaching me and others that it is okay to talk about it. Over the years I would never have spoken to anyone about what is going on. I would have bottled it up and it was eating away inside of me. It's like a pressure can. It has to expand. It only takes one little trigger.

What I would say to a mate doing it tough is, don't be a dickhead. Seek the help you need. Talk to a mate. Talk to a professional, like your GP or a psychologist or psychiatrist. Talk to someone – because you need to. Telling people is like releasing the pressure. It's not weak to speak. Be kind to yourself. Don't be a tool. Don't be a dickhead. Get help. Get a mental health check-up.



# Roy Wieske

Ageing for each individual is different. I've been fortunate that I've always been positive in my outlook from word go. I think life is short and the older we get, the shorter it seems. I intend to try and make damn good use of every day that I am on this Mother Earth.

My outlook has probably been my saviour in many ways. It doesn't steer me down a negative attitude. I try to take the positive out of any situation, no matter what it is, and I think that attitude has paid dividends to me. For the 83 years that I am now around annoying people, my attitude has been a benefit. It means that I'm still looked upon as an avenue for learning, or whatever you like to call it.

I think we're all still learning, even me at 83. I'm still learning every day of my life, and I think that applies to everybody. I'd be very surprised if it was different for other people.

I have no regrets whatsoever with any part of my life. There've been ups and downs, like everybody has in their lives. It's just a case of taking the positives out of even the negatives - and that can change your mind set for the rest of your life. It has in my case, and hence, here I am still riding the three bikes I own.

**Nothing is impossible. It is a mindset.  
So go and do whatever you would  
like to achieve. You “will” be  
surprised at what you can do when  
it’s what “you” want. Life is beautiful.**

**Roy Wieske**

I had to give up my flying of microlight planes because of my hearing. I loved my flying. I got a license to fly the microlight when I was 71 years of age. It was a learning experience, and I enjoyed every minute of that, including my flying time. I was very disappointed and downhearted when I had to sell my microlight and come back to Mother Earth.

I have three bikes and a car. I have the car because I got to go and get my cornflakes in something, and the motorbike is not very acceptable in that condition.

I think if people believe they can’t do something – they’re wrong. You can do it. All you got to do is think positively and you will get there. Simple as that. There’s good in everything, and I intend to get as much good things happening to me as I possibly can for the remainder of my few years.

When my use by date comes up, I know I’ve made good use of my life. I haven’t gone sour because of the time frame. Simple as that.

I believe mindset drives body set. I’ve always tried to keep a positive mindset for that very reason. If you have a negative mindset, your body goes accordingly with it. So, the positive mindset dictates a lot of what your physical body is going to be.

Jumping on a motorbike and going for a trip or having coffee with my mates is a big part of what has mattered for me. It will be until the day my use by date comes up and I call it quits.



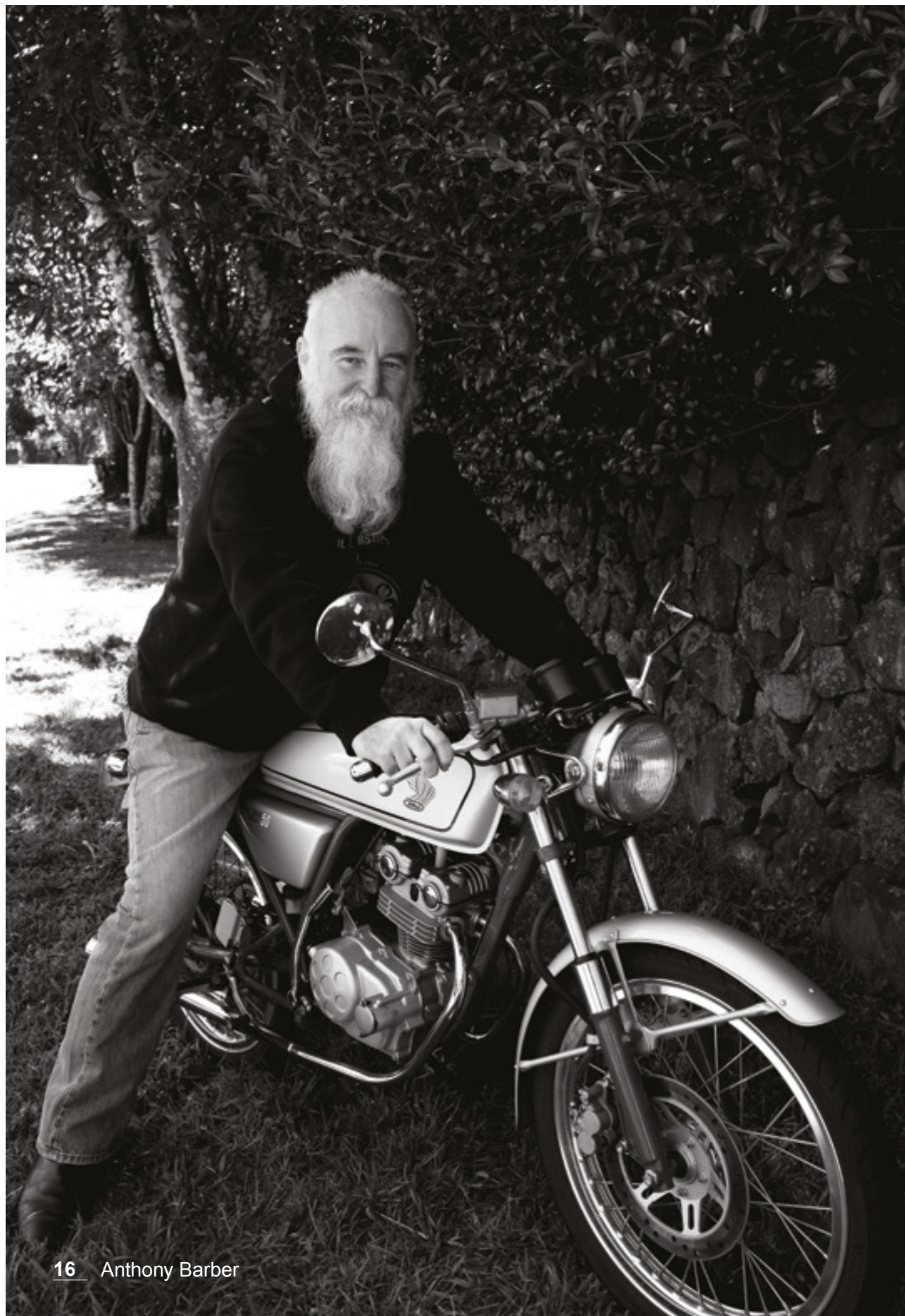
Beautiful is a mindset that is different to each person. It has a different meaning. Beautiful to me is every day that when I open my eyes in the morning and I see daylight and I say, this is a beautiful day. That makes me a beautiful person, because I think that way.

I try to be outward going. I think sitting and watching Days of Our Lives on tv does nothing for your mind or your body. Get out and meet people as much as you can. Be as active as you can, and that will tell your body that you want to be doing these things - that's exactly how I am.

I'm not saying that walking around is as easy as it used to be when I was 20 years of age, but I still try. I still go through my exercises and so forth to keep my mind and body working. My computer creates havoc for me mentally, but it's a challenge and I'm always up to a challenge. I love a challenge because it means my brain is working.

One of my neighbours is in his eighties and he and his wife are suffering. I try to assist them in any way I can, whether it be getting my son to mow their lawn, or it's me picking up the parcels that have been dropped on their front garden or me retrieving their rubbish bins. I help out in many ways. This may seem very inconsequential. Retrieving a rubbish bin from out the front doesn't mean much to me, but boy does it mean a lot to a man that's got to use a walking frame.

My message to a mate doing it tough is, nothing is impossible. It is a mindset. So go and do whatever you would like to achieve. You "will" be surprised at what you can do when it's what "you" want. Life is beautiful.  
Roy Wieske



# Anthony Barber

I have a few bikes, mostly vintage bikes. Being on my bike is recapturing very long-ago feelings of freedom. It provides focus that is very far removed from everything else that is going on in my life. If I am hurtling down a mountain road with a cliff on one side, I've got to be paying attention. I have to be 100% focused. That removes all other extraneous factors.

One of the guys I ride with is in his 70s and when I first met him, he looked like he was about to die. He had been through a long cancer battle and had been given six months to live. He had major surgery, chemotherapy, sold his business, sold his bikes, closed his bank accounts, set up an apartment for his wife and prepared to die. He could hardly breathe; he could hardly walk. He was hardly 40 kgs. Then he went to his oncologist, who said: you're right now for the next 10 years. He didn't expect to live and so he gave away everything. He turned up on the Mount and I could see he was anxious. I asked him if he wanted to go for a ride, and he did. From that point we rode most days. He has extreme anxiety and can hardly walk or breathe, but as soon as he throws his leg over his bike, he is okay. If we stop to talk to someone on the road, after a few mins he rides off. I know what that is about. He gets anxious and so he rides on.

It's a mixed bag of people on the Mount any given day. Even people I have never met before will say: shit, nice bike mate. And so, I say to them, go and get a cuppa and come sit with us.

Lots of guys would cut their arm off to save a mate; they support each other. They won't put their arm around each other and have a cry - but if someone is anxious, they will ask them, do you want to go for a ride? I recently saw another rider was anxious and said to him, I'm going for a ride, do you want to come with us for a coffee? He said, that would be f\*cking awesome, I'm trying to convince myself to go for a ride, but the anxiety is building. We talked about it and then we went for a ride. It is possible I am more aware of how people are feeling. Others do what I do, but perhaps with less self-awareness.

I've had a hard life (laughs). My wife is 10 years older, and she says its great because our bodies are about the same age. I have a lot of aches and pains. I have metal in my body, fused bones and things that don't work - mostly old football or work injuries. Often when someone rides up the Mount and gets off their bike, they will call out: what's good about getting old? We all yell back 'f\*cking nothing' and then laugh. But we know that when you have an opportunity to get old, it's a privilege. We are fortunate to have the opportunity to age, when other people don't. It means I can ride through a beautiful rainforest and have a cuppa with my mates. One more day above the ground is a good day.

I had a very mixed bag of messages about gender when I was growing up. My dad's family were ten-pound poms, proper Yorkshire men. Very stoic. The message was, if you have a hard day - get over it; you still got to go and get shit done. Don't matter how broken you are, or how late you are, you just had to go and get stuff done. None of that was talked about. It wasn't spoken, but it was known.

My mum's family were Irish and Croatian; her mum raised the kids by herself after her husband left during WWII. They were working class, and she had to get a house and survive in the 1950s when women didn't do that on their own.

My parents divorced when I was 10 and then my mum dyed her hair blue, went to university and studied arts. I had a radicalised 1980s university student of a mum. She was tough as nails. I was in high school at the time and watched as she smashed it. I learned a lot from her. She would ask me how I was feeling and tell me what was right and wrong. She would say she didn't understand

why women weren't given opportunities to do more and she questioned what men could do. She had a master's degree in linguistics.

My upbringing has given me a skill set for being a man that is a bit different to most. I suspect I am more aware of the skills I need.

I don't come across ageism. My wife's mum was 92 and wasn't sick a day in her life until just before her death. For the last 20 years she felt she was invisible because she was old. I have seen people with those feelings, and I understand them. Her perspective on how she was treated is different to my experience. It's not always ageism, it might simply be people's own perspective on how they are being treated, rather than how they are actually being treated.

The Darmouth Scar experiment<sup>8</sup> was a study that showed how people thought and behaved differently when they were tricked into thinking they had facial scars. Their experience shifted. I think ageism is like that. Because some people see themselves differently as they age - they think people treat them differently, when they might not be being treated differently at all. My view is, I am alive, and ageing is a privilege.

When you ask me what beautiful means to me, or what makes me beautiful - I think beautiful is the wrong word. Maybe it's about charming or captivating. People who are thinking about beautiful are only looking at the surface. It's not just about the surface, it's about who you are. You can say someone is nice looking, but they could be a total narcissist. It's about who the person is, not what they look like.

People don't change. That's one thing I have learned in my life. From three years old to 80 years old, people don't change.

8 <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/beyond-school-walls/202410/invisible-scars>



They are who they are. If you know someone and they do something that is surprising, it doesn't mean they have changed, it means you have learned something new about them. When you get to know them, they are a high value person because of all the things they are. Value is better than beauty. It's like measuring a person's personality traits, how do you measure someone's personality and intelligence? There are so many facets to it. We can't say one has more value than others, except in a totally qualitative and subjective way. Everyone has good and bad.

My message to a mate who is doing it tough is that everyone's got shit. People will understand. Just do the best you can, within the limits you've got, to be the best you can be.

If you have been hiding under the covers of the bed, get out of bed and have a shower and put on clean clothes. When you have done that, remind yourself you are a success today. Good job. Tomorrow do it again. The next day, get out of bed and have a cuppa in a chair. Small steps (improvements every day) can take you to places where you feel enormous self-worth. It doesn't have to be the same as others are doing. You don't have to run a multinational company to be a success. You have to achieve your own goals (short term and longer term), not someone else's goals and not the goals that you think everyone expects you to achieve.

If times are tough, you need to set goals that can be achieved within your frame of mind and current capabilities. Ask yourself, how can I be better today? How can I help myself? Treat yourself like you are a person worthy of help, then, if you think you are, others also will.

When you are getting up every day and you are feeling stronger and you meet someone who is not doing well, simply listen to them. You are doing well and now you have the ability to help others. Getting out and helping someone else can remind you how well you are doing and will certainly give you enormous feelings of self-worth. Carry the heaviest load you can, go to bed tired with feelings of eustress rather than distress.

Take those small steps and keep taking them.

**My message to a mate doing it tough is that everyone's got shit. People will understand. Just do the best you can, within the limits you've got, to be the best you can be.**

**Anthony Barber**



# Phillip J. Hiley

I returned to motorcycling kind of by accident. In 2019, my then-wife was offered a promotion in Sydney, so we moved to the metropolis just before the COVID outbreak. Happily, the apartment we rented in Erskineville only had a single parking spot, so I sold one of the cars and decided to commute to my new teaching job on the bike that replaced the car. I still can't believe that my ex fell for that one!

With my wife tied up with work and her daughter close by, I began reaching out to motorcycling groups and soon found myself riding regularly with a Sydney-based group in and around the Blue Mountains. I've always had an enquiring mind and a streak of perfectionism, so it didn't take long to realise there was plenty to learn from the "old hands" with grey hair and time to spare. Many of our chats were about the usual motorcycle obsessions - tyres, riding gear, after-market tweaks. But just as often they drifted into personal territory: surviving cancer, navigating divorce, retirement. What struck me most was how much quiet wisdom circulates in this community.

Now, as 2025 winds down and I approach my 59th year, I look back with gratitude - thinning hair and all. Gratitude, I've learned, is key to happiness. When I returned to Brisbane in 2021, I was determined to keep the spirit of riding alive and reconnect with others who share the passion.

**If I had a message for a mate doing it tough, it would be this: “keep on keeping on.” I tell myself that often. Even when it hurts, I’m not ready to lie down yet. There’s still road ahead—and that’s something worth riding for.**

**Phillip J. Hiley**

I’d ridden at Mount Glorious years earlier, back in 2007, but at the time I felt more like an outsider. Maybe it was fear, maybe a touch of imposter syndrome. Whatever it was, it’s long gone. These days I belong among the riders who gather at the Mount Glorious Café for too many coffees and long conversations about life and its seasons. Around what’s known as “The Table of Wisdom” (there’s even a plaque), you’ll hear laughter, honesty, and stories that speak to resilience. Pull up one of the tired plastic chairs - mould and all, and you’ll always find a welcome.

Belonging, I’ve learned, begins with saying “yes.” Yes, to the conversation, yes to the ride, yes to connection. Sometimes it ends with a handshake and a cheerful “stay upright.” Sometimes with friendship. Either way, we look out for one another, and that, in Maslow’s sense, is what happiness is built on.

The bikers are my people. We know each other’s stories, some inspiring, some heavy, but there’s comfort in that shared understanding. I used to be a police officer, so talking with people comes naturally. Up on the mountain, the talk is real and unfiltered. The café staff know us; we’re part of the fabric of the place. Every ride teaches me something - about technique, about life, or about myself. Yes, motorcycling has its risks, but the rewards far outweigh them: freedom, adventure, a touch of poetry in motion.

Lately, I’ve become involved in a group called HNM (Helping New Motorcyclists), started by John Burrill, chair of the Queensland



Motorcycle Council. John is in his seventies now and still gives endless time to support others. For many of us, this work gives a sense of purpose, helping new or returning riders find their confidence, just as others once helped us.

Belonging also extends beyond the Café or the road. It's in knowing where to get your bike serviced and who to trust. It's old-school, person-to-person communication - the kind technology can't replace.

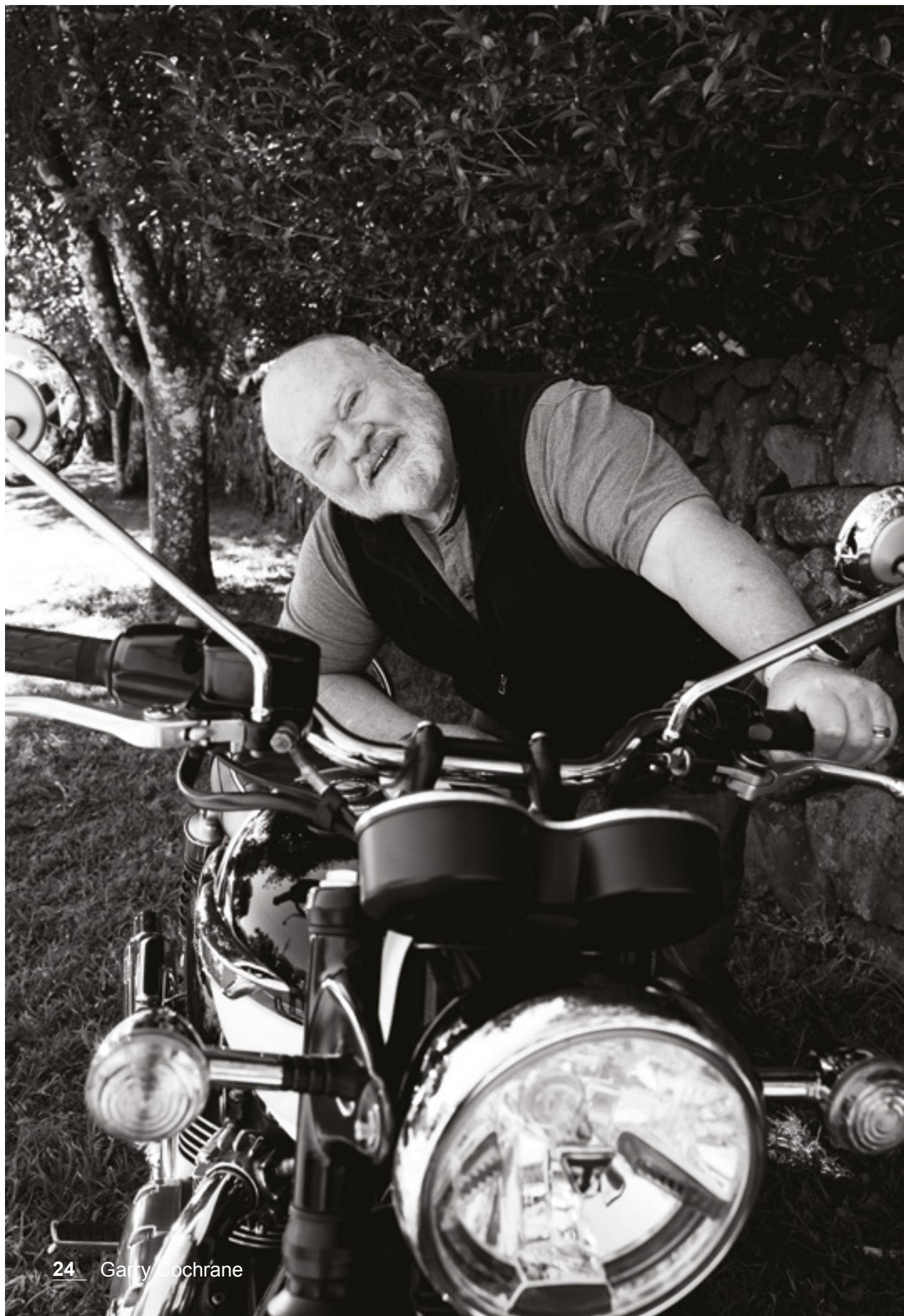
My girlfriend is a rider too; we met on Mount Glorious. When we argue, she jokes that she'll "go up to the cafe and tell everyone what a terrible human I am." It's said with a smile, but it speaks volumes about how central that place, and those people, are in our lives.

I've endured my own challenges too. I've lived with anxiety since my teens but didn't get help until my forties. Back then, admitting to it felt like failure, and there was no internet to assist with a perspective. It wasn't until I had what I now know was a panic attack that I sought treatment. Seeing the word anxiety on the medication label was confronting, but it also gave it a name - and power over it. Exercise became my therapy. These days, my knee protests, so I do what I can. I drink less, think more, and try to turn experience into wisdom - though I've learned that only happens if you're willing to listen.

Purpose matters. For some, it's family or grandchildren. For me, it's connection and contribution. Watching my parents age reminds me that purpose and belonging are what keep us going. My dad's world has shrunk to the garden gate. My mum, at eighty, worries that nothing good lies ahead. I think it's all about perspective.

For me, beauty lives in small moments - a film that stirs emotion, a perfect corner taken cleanly, a phone call home. Those moments make me feel grounded, grateful, and part of something larger.

If I had a message for a mate doing it tough, it would be this: "keep on keeping on." I tell myself that often. Even when it hurts, I'm not ready to lie down yet. There's still road ahead—and that's something worth riding for.



# Garry Cochrane

I've been riding for over 50 years and have had a couple of spills but have done okay. Riding keeps me focused on life. When you are riding, all your senses are alive. It's like really being alive. You are not just sitting there – dwelling on yourself. You are doing something. Its enjoyable.

Riding up to Mount Glorious is great. I get to catch up with the other riders, and we have common interests. We can talk to each other and if we have a problem, we can talk about it and share ideas for getting through it. We talk about the experience of life and how to get through it. I get up there every week.

Sometimes my wife Penny comes up there with me, but mostly she leaves me to catch up with the boys.

My mind is starting to go down the path of a kind of dementia. I was working in disability care, doing 12-hour shifts and I had some tests, and they said I was border line dementia. But it was the lack of sleep that affects my mind. That's tough for me. I keep trying to exercise my mind to keep it sharp. I think going up the Mount with the other blokes and talking with them is important. They seem to be forgiving. I am aware that my mind will start to go a bit.

I have experienced ageism. A few years ago, I slipped on rubber mats outside a house and fell. I didn't do any damage to myself – but the owners came out and said: you poor old man. I felt that was ageist. That make me feel like that I am lost, like I'm on the downhill, the end is near. I soldiered on and I didn't let it take effect, but it stuck in my mind.

**To a mate doing it tough I would say, there are people around that are here for you. You are not alone. When you can talk to other people about what you are experiencing - it can clear your head to what you are thinking about and to an understanding that it's not as bad as you thought. You will also discover you are not the only one with a problem. Sometimes other people have problems that are worse. I am here for you. Let's grow old together. Garry Cochrane**

Age is not the barrier, it's your mental state and physical state. Some of the clients I work with in their 90s are still at it. They are gung-ho and at it. They are still driving and look like they will live forever. It affects me when the clients die, I feel sad.

I don't feel lonely, but if I didn't have my wife or daughter around, or was not around my mates, it would be lonely. I wouldn't have that closeness or understanding from people who know me.

When I was growing up my dad was in the railways and I went from one school to another and lost friends each time. Then I became a bit of a loner. When I was 23, I was lonely, because I moved to Queensland and didn't have any friends or family close by. I even had that thought that what was I living for - there is nothing here to me, because that social connection was gone. If you can't connect with community, there is no mutual understanding or goals or shared interests. But then I ended up meeting Penny, and I met a lot more people through her.

The last couple of years I have made more friends, mostly through motorcycle riding. I am pleased I kept going when I felt like giving up - I have children and grandchildren now. I sucked it up and knew it couldn't get worse, and I had to make something of it. It was a bit of a battle to try to connect to people, but I did it.



I never had any discussions with my parents about what being a man was. I have always heard the cliché about being the man of the house – but there weren't conversations about what it was to be a man. I went to a tech school, and it was mostly boys. I had a sister, but I didn't know a lot of women.

This thing about gender now, we are different. I have female traits because I am in the caring industry. That is supposed to be a common trait of a woman. I care for people. I have a female take on life. It used to be that most men are in trades, but there are lots of females in trades now. I don't judge people by their gender. Some women are good at driving a truck and some men are better at caring.

Some people say we should cover up our emotions and others say we should toughen up. If something happens, I try to teach my grandchildren, if you got a problem you got to toughen up and face it. When you pass a barrier and succeed or fail – you did it. You preserved. You tried. You got past the barrier.

I think interaction with people who are experiencing the same sort of thing is important for mental health. You don't have to sit there and talk about your problem. If you talk about different things, even that are not directly related to you, you are getting support. You are supporting them, and they are helping you to cope. People talk about what they are experiencing and how they are getting through it, and I think, that's a good idea – I'll try that myself.

I don't think beautiful is about looks. It's not a pretty thing. It's your personality and what you reflect. It's about how people present themselves. Caring people are beautiful people. People who are helpful, supportive and there for others are also beautiful. Being caring is a two-way street – you help people and then they turn around and help you.

What makes me beautiful is that I support people and help them. I don't just do my normal job. I do other things for them as well.

One of my clients has a leaky tap and the last plumber charged her \$4000 to fix it. It just needed a clamp, so I fixed it. She was grateful. Another client has the drawers on his cupboards are falling off. It's not part of my job to fix them, but it is part of who I am. I am a helpful person. I make their life better and easier. Another smiley day for them.

To a mate doing it tough I would say, there are people around that are here for you. You are not alone. I am here for you. Let's grow old together

Surround yourself with people that won't judge you. I know you might be worried you are going to be judged or shunned – so, find people that won't condemn you. It makes communication a lot better, and it can help you through problems. When you can talk to other people about what you are experiencing - it can clear your head to what you are thinking about and to an understanding that it's not as bad as you thought. You will also discover you are not the only one with a problem. Sometimes other people have problems that are worse.



# Linda Rankine

I've been riding since I was 15 years old. I sold my bike when I decided to have children and then I bought another bike when they went to university. I've had one ever since.

I'm fairly new to Brisbane, so I am just getting used to the roads and meeting other riders. When I ride my bike, I feel free. It's exhilarating. You are exposed to the elements. Anything can get you if you are not aware. You have to have an innate ability to keep an eye on what's around you. I love that.

When I arrived in Brisbane, I went up to Mount Glorious and found a group of guys at the Café and asked if I could join them for a chat. I've met some great riders. I got invited to join the Distinguished Gentlemen's ride; they promote men's mental health and fight prostate cancer.

I love riding with the men's groups. I love the conversations we have. As soon as they know I can ride - it's fine that I'm a woman. When I was up North Queensland, some of the men used to think I couldn't ride because I am a woman. They told me to ride up the back, because I am a woman. They were surprised I can ride. They put me at the tail of the ride because they thought I can't ride, because I am a woman. I used to outride a lot of them.

Sometimes they don't expect women to have a big bike like I've got. Often when I get off my bike a bloke will ask if I was riding my husband's bike.

When I was growing up, boys got the message they could do anything they like. I didn't like that. I was a tom boy and, in my view, if the boys could do it - I could do it. My grandfather told me not to go to university because I was a woman and because I would have kids, so the education would be wasted.

When I was a teacher, it was different for men and women. The men got all the management roles. The females were expected to do everything; the men were let off. They want more males in the teaching system so they would do anything for them. There is a lot of gender inequality.

**My message to a mate doing it tough is, your glass is always half full - it's never half empty. Be grateful for what you have. We have to learn gratitude; we have to value what we have and not want more than we have. I want my mates to know; I'm here if you need someone to talk to or be with. Don't isolate yourself - talk to someone. A problem shared is a problem halved.**

**Linda Rankine**

Now I think there is more awareness of gender bias and discrimination and there is more protection for women. One of my daughters is an electrical engineer and the other is a dentist, so they have both made it in male dominated fields. But it's still not equal.

When I got cancer, my ex got nasty. When I was having radiotherapy, he told me he was over my cancer and that I had been neglecting him since I had cancer. He was so negative. He thought I was there to look after him. All that negativity takes its toll. It was positivity that got me through the cancer. I used to be focused on making him happy and now I want to make myself happy. He was not caring about me at all, and it took the cancer for me to see it. I got to look after myself first.

I think men and women are different. Men don't talk about their emotions, and they don't show their emotions. The younger ones do and are a bit softer, but old men think they have to be tough. It's weird not to show your emotions. It's not a good idea. They should be able to talk about their problems. If they share what they are feeling there will be someone else feeling the same. They need to know they are not the only ones feeling what they do. With my friends we talk about our difficulties, and we find that helpful.

As I have gotten older, I am not as active and mobile as I was. If I fall over now, I am more likely to injure myself.

I also don't worry about my looks as much. I am starting to worry I have a few wrinkles and saggy baggy bits, but it's part of ageing. I haven't had any cosmetic surgery. I have a pretty good memory, sometimes it lets me down. I had chemo last year, that made it worse. I had breast cancer and had to have a lumpectomy and chemo and radiotherapy. I now have the all clear.



Because I had cancer, I had to give up teaching. I would love to go back to work but I am worried about kids running down older teachers.

I feel a lot younger than I am. I feel like I am about 50, because I have a positive attitude and love a joke. I love a bit of sarcasm. My mother seems like 10 years younger than she is, because of her attitude. She was a very positive person with a lot of energy. But my former mother-in-law was younger than my mother but seemed older. She used to say she couldn't do this or that and she would tell me I shouldn't ride a bike. I had to curb riding when I was going through chemo, but I'm not going to stop.

You gotta keep doing what you can do, you don't stop because you are old. People are surprised I am still riding because of my gender and age.

I don't come across ageism much. But as a female getting older and I am in a bike shop, the sales assistants won't look at me. Some people are dismissive; I can read how they react. Some people talk to me differently. They think I'm not as clever or tech savvy because of my age.

When I have a problem, I see it as a challenge, and I want to beat it. I am not as agile as I was, and I use the hand railing on the stairs now. I have to be more mindful of my balance, particularly because of the chemo. I would love to go to Antarctica. I need to get my fitness back up, so I have started back at the gym.

I have a beautiful positive attitude. I have had it all my life. I am a middle child, and I was always out there. I was the naughty one. I was outspoken.

Beautiful to me is about inside beauty. I think inside beauty is more important than beautiful on the outside. Inside beauty is about having a beautiful soul, temperament and nature.

What makes me beautiful is my nature. I am a kind person. Giving. Empathetic. Nice all over. I have compassion. I have resilience. I am not letting anything get me down. I make the best of every opportunity, always. My glass isn't half empty – its half full.

My message to a mate doing it tough is, your glass is always half full. It's never half empty. Be grateful for what you have. We have to learn gratitude; we have to value what we have – and not want more than we have. I want my mates to know; I'm here is you need someone to talk to or be with. Don't isolate yourself, talk to someone. A problem share is a problem halved.

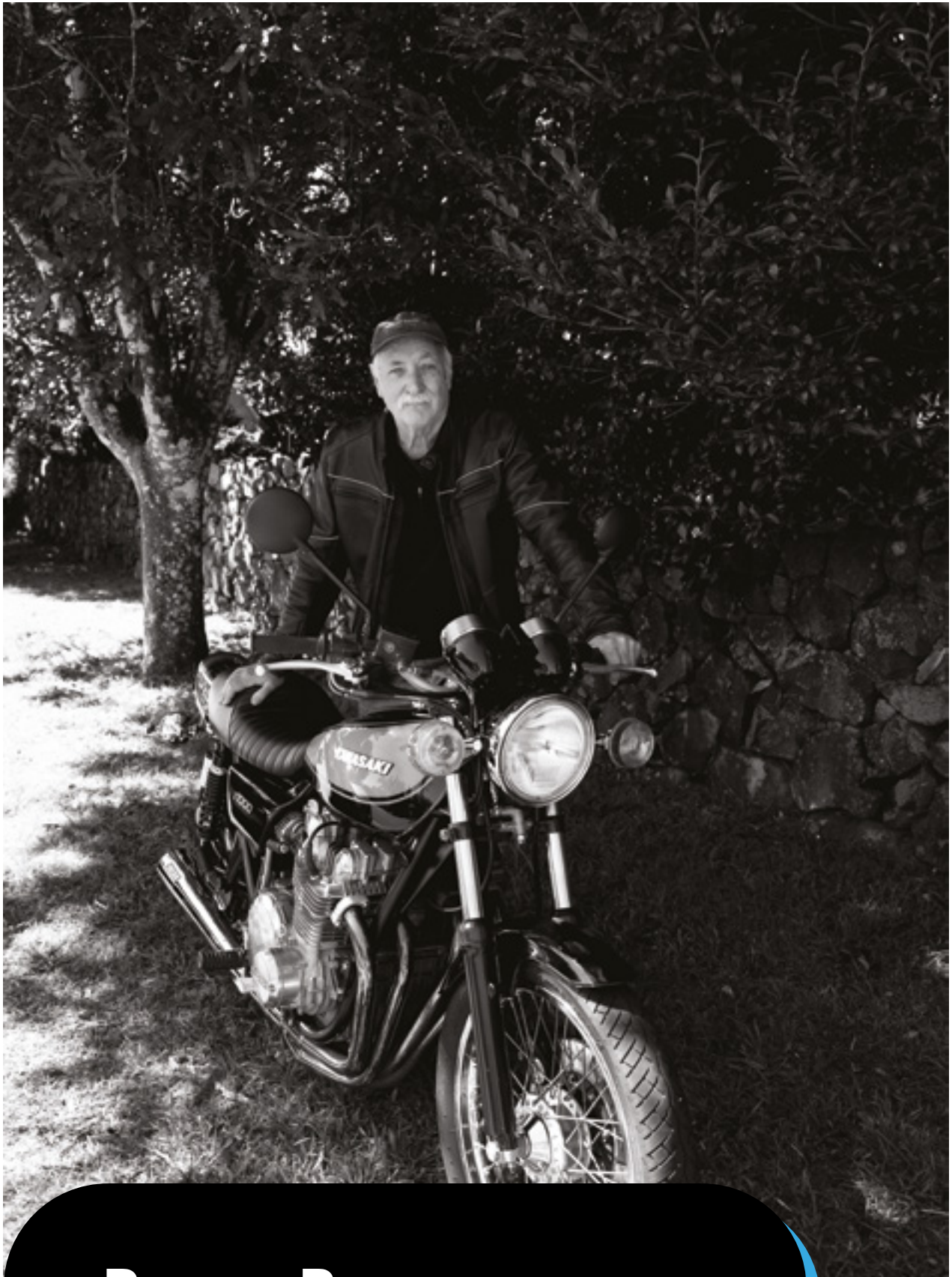


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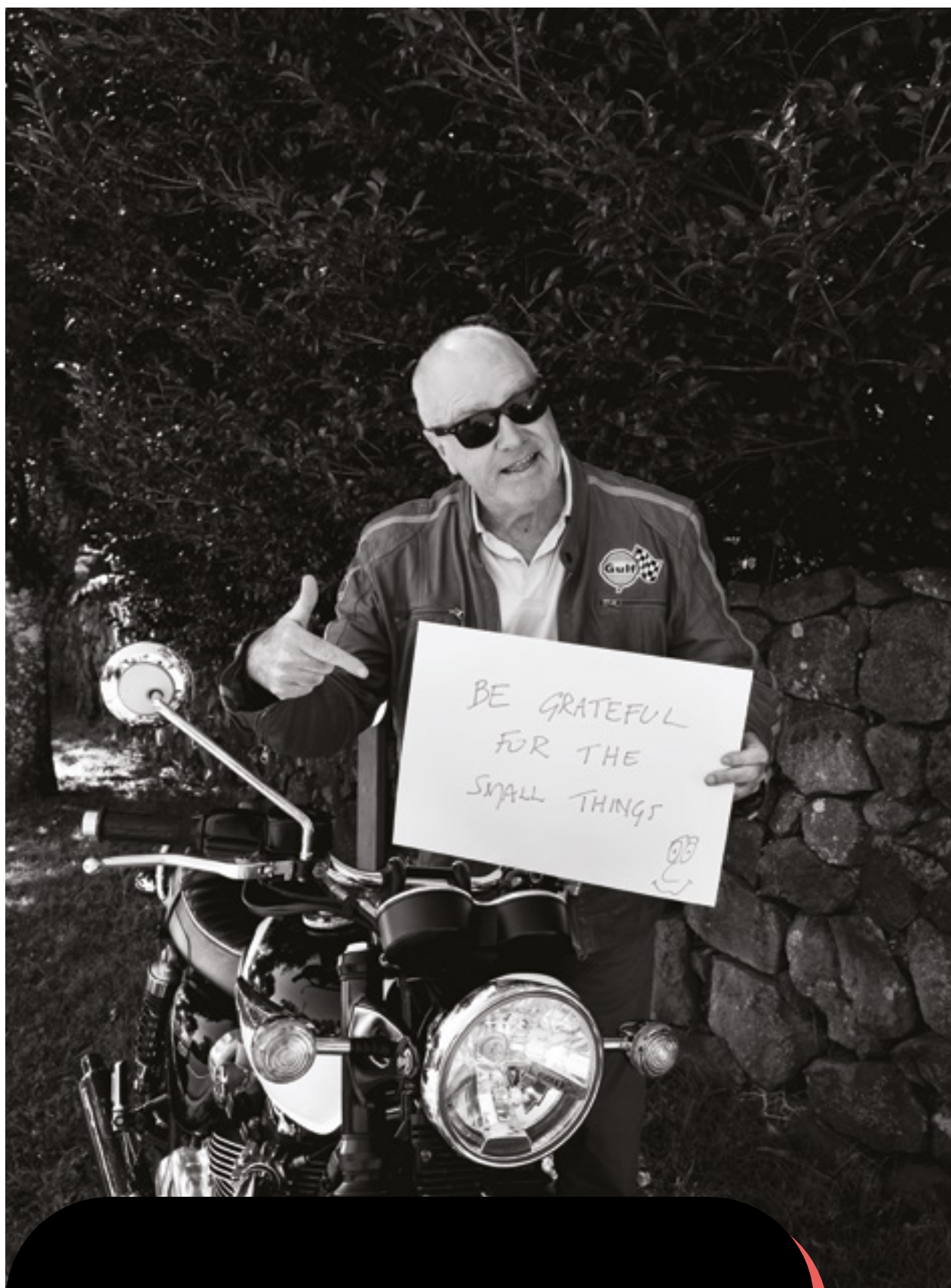
**Keith Collett**





**Bruce Berry**





**Greg T Ross**

# Project overview

This section of the resource provides an overview of the Mount Glorious project, including the aims, participants, activities, evaluation and key insights.

## Aims

The aims of the Old is Beautiful project are to help older people combat internalised ageism and to build respect for older people in the broader community. These aims were tailored for the Mount Glorious project, which aims to:

- Explore the gendered experience of ageing and ageism
- Explore historical and contemporary perspectives on gender
- Identify strategies for getting through ageism and ‘tough times’
- Share portraits and messages from participants to:
  - assist other older people cope with ageing, ageism and life changes
  - promote connections between older people and the broader community
  - help men who are not yet old to identify a positive ageing trajectory and flexible masculine norms.

## Participants

An invitation to participate in the project was posted in the Mount Glorious Café, calling for riders aged 65+ to participate. Expressions of interest included three men in their fifties – and the opportunity for intergenerational conversations about gender and ageing were embraced. People who expressed interest in attending were provided with an information sheet and required to return a signed consent form before participating.

Eleven riders participated, including 10 men and one woman, with an average age of 70 years. The oldest participant was 83 years old, the youngest 57.

## Activities

Prior to the discussion, participants were invited to participate in a phone interview, and to watch *Two Good Men*, a short film on masculinity and ageing.<sup>9</sup> The purpose of the film was to prompt conversations about gender and ageing. Phone interviews focused on the following topics:

- The experience of riding a motor bike
- The aspects of ageing and ageism that can be difficult

- Childhood lessons on being a man (or woman) and whether what these lessons were useful or continue to be useful
- Strategies for getting through tough times
- What beautiful means to them – and what makes them beautiful
- A message for a mate doing it tough.

In interviews, several participants expressed their valuing of the project but questioned the appropriateness of the word ‘beautiful’ for older men. This provided valuable opportunities to explore the term as a provocation, or invitation to reflect on ageism and gender norms; rather than view ‘beautiful’ as a prescription. The word was also presented as an opportunity to expand current narrow definitions of beauty (that often underpin ageism) to promote valuing of all ages, genders, body shapes and sizes, skin colours, sexualities and abilities.

The notes from participant phone interviews were transcribed and emailed to participants for verification following the workshop.

A two-hour discussion was facilitated in the Mount Glorious Café, a space valued by riders. The noise and public

<sup>9</sup> <https://youtu.be/pEZFlaj-dTk?si=rHSajzg1uh5qWcwY>

nature of the café made it difficult to discuss sensitive questions in any deep way – however, interviews provided the opportunity for more in-depth exploration. Following the café discussion, participants were invited to have their portraits taken by a professional photographer, with their bike.

Participants portraits and messages are shared through this report, and a series of community launch and exhibition activities have been planned to engage the community in reflection on gender, ageing and ageism.

## Evaluation

The project was evaluated using a survey, circulated after the discussion. Survey questions were structured around The Kirkpatrick Model,<sup>10</sup> or rating the project relevance and learning. The survey was completed by three participants. Two participants strongly agreed with a statement that the project was relevant, and that they learned something and one agreed to both statements. Comments provided include the following:

- *Fantastic initiative - thought provoking meeting. Great interactions. ...*
- *Worthwhile. Interesting*
- *Thoroughly enjoyed the experience*
- *[I learned] that we should be grateful for reaching such an age – something others haven't been lucky enough to*
- *[I learned] insights into how other mature males think and feel.*

There is an opportunity to follow participants up after the project exhibition and distribution of the project report. Follow up could focus on whether the sharing of stories and messages to a mate doing it tough have prompted further conversations about the gendered experiences of ageing, ageism and Elder Abuse.

## Insights on gender, ageing, ageism, and beauty

Analysis of the seven interviews resulted in the valuable insights into the significance of being part of the Mount Glorious rider's groups, on ageing and ageism, on gender norms and emotional expression, what beautiful means and what it takes to promote mental wellbeing. These insights are summarised in the following section.

## Freedom, connection and riding

All the interviewees were passionate about their bikes and their riding community. Shane described being on his bike as 'wind therapy', or an opportunity to clear his head. Others shared how riding provided them with 'time out' and a sense of freedom, particularly related to the focus required for riding. This focus was described by Anthony the following way

*Being on my bike is recapturing very long-ago feelings of freedom. It provides focus that is very far removed from everything else that is going on in my life. If I am hurtling down a mountain road with a cliff on one side, I've got to be paying attention. I have to be 100% focused. That removes all other extraneous factors. (Anthony, participant)*

All interviewees loved being riders on Mount Glorious and described a sense of belonging, comradery and connection to other riders. The Mount Glorious Café was a meeting place, where participants could connect to talk about ageing and the challenges life presented them.

10 <https://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/the-kirkpatrick-model/>

## Ageing and ageism

Most participants were aware of the challenges that can accompany ageing, including ageism. Awareness came from the first-hand experiences of some older participants, and observation by younger participants of their family and friends. While participants were aware of ageism, it was not presented as a significant, overwhelming or disempowering problem.

It may be useful in future workshops to outline what ageism is, what the impacts are, how to recognise it, and how to protect against it. Given the project is concerned with the high suicide rate for older men, and responds to the psychological issues for older men (driven by ageism), clarifying the problem of ageism and the solutions is likely to be an important step in supporting older men.

## Gender norms and emotional expression

Several male participants described restrictive gender norms in their youth, particularly related to emotional expression. For example, Gerry described growing up in a small town as follows,

*You would walk down the street, and someone would pick a fight with you. That's how you proved you were a man, I guess. ..., the whole thing about being a man was to just get on with it. When something bad or difficult happened, we were taught to just get on with it. You didn't let it affect you or show that it affected you. (Gerry, participant)*

In their 'messages to a mate doing it tough', many of the men described not showing emotions as problematic. Some men recalled being asked if they were okay – and replying that they were, when they were not. Shane reflected on the unhelpful message that men should repress their emotions,

*When I was growing up, we were taught don't show your emotions, don't cry in front of everyone. Over the last years, with what I have been going through, I know that it is bullshit! You can't bottle it up. It has to come out somehow. It will come out in anger, or you will lose it one day. What I have been though changed that view for me. I now know it's not okay to bottle it up.*

**(Shane, participant)**

Some participants noted gender norms had shifted. The only female participant reflected that compared with older men, *younger men are a bit softer, but old men think they have to be tough.*

**(Linda, participant)**

While some noticed a generational shift – others reported that having children and grandchildren had taught them the importance of showing their emotions.



## What beautiful means

The term 'beautiful' was contested by some participants, providing a valuable opportunity to critique what the word meant. Individuals' exploration of what made them beautiful was made easier by the preceding question about what beautiful meant to them.

Beautiful was often described as a feeling, or the characteristics or values of a person – rather than physical beauty. Feelings included being alive, waking up in the morning and riding a motorbike. The characteristics that participants described as making them beautiful included having a positive attitude, being kind, being connected, having empathy or wisdom and caring for others.

## Message to a mate

The final interview question asked participants to share a message to a mate doing it tough. The responses were powerful and moving. Many of the participants drew on their own experiences doing it tough, to share their messages for a mate.

Many of the messages included encouragement for men to talk to others about what is worrying them and how they are feeling. Some participants challenged mates who mistakenly believe they are the only ones experiencing difficulty. As Anthony said, *everyone has shit happen*.  
(Anthony, participant)

Participants wanted their mates to talk about what they were experiencing, and to understand this can be a helpful thing to do. As Garry suggested, *sometimes sharing, can clear your head to what you are thinking about and to an understanding that it's not as bad as you thought*.  
(Garry, participant)

## Final reflections on the Mount Glorious project

The Mount Glorious project worked with older riders to explore their perspectives on the gendered experience of ageing, ageism and mental wellbeing. While the project involved a short activity with a small number of participants, the results provide valuable insights into the power of peer learning and support. The participants have much life experience and wisdom, and their messages are likely to resonate with older men doing it tough.

The project grew from concerns about the ageism and high suicide rates for men over 80 – and a body of research calling older men's peer support programs. Alongside the focus on older men, this project identifies an opportunity to consider the historical social pressure experienced by many older men, to be 'strong' by not talking about their emotions and experiences. Exploring historical messaging about gender – and whether those early messages are still relevant – provides a valuable opportunity to explore the skills older men need in an ageist world. It also provides an opportunity for reflection on the societal pressure placed on older men to express their gender in ways that no longer serve them.

# Useful information

## About ADA Australia

Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia (ADA Australia) is a not-for-profit, independent advocacy and information service supporting and improving the wellbeing of older people and people with disability in Queensland. Our services are free, confidential and independent – and include the following:

### Aged Care Advocacy & Care finder

- Assist with accessing and getting the most from your aged care services, including help to access support through the care finder program
- Support to express your views and wishes and to work through care related issues with your aged care provider
- Assist you understand aged care provider agreements and costs.

### Elder Abuse Advocacy

- Help to address issues of elder abuse in aged care.

### Disability Advocacy

Assist with accessing disability support services, including the NDIS

- Support to work through issues with your service provider, the NDIS or other services
- Assist with disability discrimination and unfair treatment
- Disability advocacy support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders with disability.

### Community Legal Service

- Help with Enduring Power of Attorney, guardianship and administration matters
- Help to resolve issues with your Attorney/s
- Representation at the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) and the Mental Health Review Tribunal (MHRT)
- Legal support to people with mental health conditions to navigate the justice system
- Seniors Legal and Social Support Service providing access to legal advice across outback Queensland.

### Contact details

**Phone:** Call 1800 700 600 Aged Care Advocacy Line

**Hours:** 8am – 8pm Mon – Fri | 10am – 4pm Sat

**Website:** <https://adaaustralia.com.au/>



# Support services

## For everyone

- Lifeline for anyone having a personal crisis — call 13 11 14 or chat online
- Beyond Blue has health resources specifically designed for people of every age. Contact them through the webpage <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/> or call 1300 22 4636
- SANE Australia is for people living with a mental illness, call 1800 187 263 or chat online <https://www.sane.org/>
- The Suicide Call Back Service can provide immediate support to anyone feeling suicidal — call 1300 659 467 or web: <https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/>

## For men

- Men's Line Australia is an online counselling and forum for men call 1300 78 99 78 or web: <https://mensline.org.au/>
- Men's Referral Service is the national counselling, information and referral service for men who use violence and abuse, to change their behaviour. Call 1300 766 491 or <https://ntv.org.au/mrs/>
- Dads In Distress is a peer support for separated dads, call 1300 853 437 or web: <https://www.parentsbeyondbreakup.com/dids>
- Brother to Brother is a crisis line for Aboriginal men, call 1800 435 799 or web: <https://dardimunwurro.com.au/>

**What I would say to a mate doing it tough, don't be a dickhead. Seek the help you need. Talk to a mate. Talk to a professional, like your GP or a psychologist or psychiatrist. Talk to someone – because you need to. Telling people is like releasing the pressure. It's not weak to speak. Be kind to yourself. Don't be a tool. Get help. Get a mental health check up.**

**Shane Dunseath**



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