

On the 23rd of October 2023, Keith (Kal) James Carrick, OAM, my partner of 43 years, died on his terms and in my arms.

moved to Darwin in the early 1970s with this first job being as a motor mechanic, he enjoyed the outback pursuits such as hunting fishing and the laid back lifestyle that Darwin offered.

He ventured into more adventurous means of employment over the decades, such as running the mobile abattoir at Waigate, buffalo shooting at Wild Boar and Point Stuart, live catching at Mudginberri, where the first catching arm was constructed, as a consultant to the northern territory government domesticating wild Buffalo at Beatrice Hill, mustering at Koolpinya and Humpty doo stations and as owner/manager of Urapunga station in South West Arnhem land, till the mid nineties.

He had a passion for motorcycles, building and racing in his youth and later in life. He was a survivor of the Catholic orphanage system and with little formal education, he developed engineering skills through necessity, innovative ideas and common sense of approach, when he applied to all facets of his life. Kal was awarded the OAM in 2018 for "Service to the livestock industry", through the development of the bionic arm.

After a 6 year battle with cancer various treatments and operations the eventual breakdown of other organs, the final spread was diagnosed as terminal.

The palliative care team was engaged but Kal promptly advised them that he was not going to be hanging around and he made contact with the voluntary assisted dying team, as fortunately the VAD act was introduced in Qld earlier this year. The response from the team when approached was prompt with a doctor's visit to the home the very next day as he insisted "I don't want to kick this can down the road for weeks".

We found their engagement with us to be very factual honest and compassionate. The process was to take 14 days for a second doctors review and other consultations, but he insisted they booked the hospital bed now as he didn't want to miss out on a bed when approval was granted.

But this time passed slowly for him as his body deteriorated and he became quite distressed as he knew that he was now too weak to end his misery and pain by himself.

I told him on the Sunday that Tuesday was the day and his demeanour immediately changed to that of relief and joy

He was keen shooter and wanted a last shot, so at 5am on his last morning we assisted him to shooting range where he hit a beer can at 1050 yards .

Kal wanted no fuss and no funeral after a small family gathering at home small gathering of 3 drove to the hospital 30 kilometres away .

Strangely this time was not a sorrowful journey he was happy and relieved keeping us occupied with light banter and happy memories.

He confidently walked into the hospital barefooted remarking, "I don't need shoes where I'm going ".

The VAD doctor and lovely assistant made feel comfortable and left us to have some time together. Kal was jolly, and after he enjoyed a beer and designed gate for the farm he said goodbye and told the doctor he was ready and lay on the bed.

It was explained again that the injection would put him to sleep and he would feel no pain. After confirming that he understood that he was going to die, he said I promise I won't snore. I cradled him in my arms and in two breaths, he snored and was gone. I couldn't help but giggle as my eyes welled with tears, at last he was at peace. If there is such a thing as a beautiful death that was it. Yes. It was sad and I still feel my loss every day, but I totally respect my husband's choice to end his suffering and am so grateful that Queensland has this opportunity in place for those who need it and wish to end their lives on their own terms and with dignity.

Story written by Rae Carrick (wife)