

Mum channels her inner tiger

Marie Abley bought her first home in Australind at the age of 61.
Picture: Breanna Redhead

UNSUNG HEROES

BREANNA REDHEAD



An inspired Australind woman is proving age is just a number, buying her first home, swimming the Rottneest Channel and starting her own business in her 60s.

Marie Abley, 62, has surprised herself in what she's been able to achieve since relocating to the South West from Melbourne last year by simply "saying yes" to any and all opportunities and is hoping to encourage others to do the same.

Born in Auckland as a first-generation Aitutaki woman on her mother's side, she later moved to mainland Australia with her cousins in 1981.

Raising five children on her own, she said though it was tough, it was a great period of self-growth.

"Being on my own, I realised there's a tiger in there," she said.

"When you don't have someone in your life anymore, you find that in yourself.

"Sometimes experiences in your life can leave you unsure of yourself or a bit anxious so you forget what you're capable of."

After inheriting some family money after the passing of her parents she was finally able to achieve her lifelong dream of owning her own home.

Unsure where to settle down, she made the spontaneous decision to purchase a hilltop home in Australind, motivated to be close to her son, Shawn, who had moved to Western Australia for work.

While admitting it was difficult to leave her home State Victoria of 40 years, she embraced the new opportunity.

"I missed my family, I missed my grandkids," she confessed.

"Whenever they came to see me here in the west and they'd leave I was just a mess, I didn't realise how much I'd miss them. . . because my whole life was dedicated to them.

"But I'm so glad I did it, I feel like it was meant to happen."

She said it was her love of driving that encouraged her to hop in her van and venture more than 3000km to the South West, together with dog Bella and two cats Sam and Blackie.

"I bought a house in another State because I liked the thought that I could drive all that way," she laughed.

"I was just so excited to get in my van and go, getting here was half the fun."

Now living in a coastal area, she soon turned to swimming as a form of exercise — her son Shawn challenging her to take on the Rottneest Channel Swim in 2024 as a goal.

Tracking well with her training, the pair decided to instead take part this year, together with friends Daniel Ibbs and Rowan Kerr.

Though admittedly never a keen swimmer, she said she was nervous to take on such a great physical feat as an older person.

"I'm not a swimmer. I'm not anyone who's ever competed in swimming," she said.

But arriving on the white sandy shores of Rottneest Island, she said she couldn't wipe the smile off her face.

"I never knew I could do that, that it was in me," she said.

"I wouldn't have found that part (of myself) if I hadn't come here, I wouldn't have experienced that."

Looking for her next adventure, the disability worker of 20 years decided to launch her own business — Abley Care — to provide care and companionship to those who need support.

Undertaking a Certificate IV in Entrepreneurship and starting a self-employment assistance program with APM Employment Services two months ago, she said she was in awe of how much she was able to learn in such a short time.

"I can't believe the support that I've got here (in WA) in one year and I want to share that with others, to give them strength and confidence and love."

"At 62, I never thought that I had an opportunity to go into a business, never ever.

"Never underestimate yourself — when you persist with something in life, life opens itself up for you."



Marie and Shaun competing in the 2023 Rottneest Channel Swim.



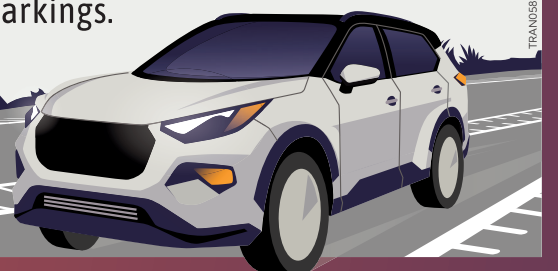
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