

NEWS


Former Iraq hostage dies aged 78 in Melbourne home

The “larger-than-life” Melbourne man, Douglas Wood, who was kidnapped while working in Iraq in 2005, has been found dead in his home.

Ellen Whinnett, Herald Sun

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 Former Iraq hostage Douglas Wood has died, after being found in his Melbourne home.

Douglas Wood, the larrikin engineer rescued after a six-week kidnap ordeal in Iraq in 2005, has died.

Geelong-raised Mr Wood, 78, was found dead at his home in an outer suburb of Melbourne on Thursday.

His brother Malcolm said while Mr Wood had many health problems, including being almost blind and being required to use a mobility scooter, his death was still a shock.



 Douglas Wood was kidnapped while working as an engineer in Iraq.



Wood was freed after a six-week ordeal in 2005.

He is believed to have passed away on New Year's Eve and was found by a friend who went looking for him after he missed an appointment.

A knockabout character with a great sense of adventure and fun, Mr Wood was working as an engineer in Iraq when he was kidnapped in 2005, aged 63.

He was rescued in a military operation involving Iraqi and US after six weeks being held by a group calling itself the Shura Council of the Mujahedeen of Iraq.



Wood famously asked how his beloved Geelong Cats were going upon release.

He won hearts after asking his rescuers for a beer and news on his beloved Geelong Cats.

Malcolm Wood said his brother had continued to support the Cats all his life, and while his failing vision stopped him attending games, he watched every match sitting up close to his big-screen TV.

“He had quite a circle of mates and would meet them at pubs and other meeting places,” Mr Wood said of his older brother.

“He was a larger-than-life character.

“Doug was a very hearty, genial, kind man, with never a bad word for anybody.”



After his return to Australia following his release, negotiated by the Howard Government, Mr Wood settled into a quiet life in Melbourne, lobbying for some of his Iraqi rescuers and their families to be granted refugee status in Australia.

His marriage to his second wife, Yvonne, broke down and she returned to her homeland of the US, where Mr Wood's daughter Christina and her two children also live.

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Mr Wood will be privately cremated, and a memorial service will be held at a date to be fixed, probably in the Anglesea or Geelong area where the family, including brothers Malcolm, Vernon and Graeme, spent their early years.

