

As Premier approaches his 60th birthday he says he only feels 40 and commits to contesting 2029 election

JOE SPAGNOLO

Premier Roger Cook has declared 60 is the new 40 as he prepares to say goodbye to his 50s.

Ahead of turning 60 on Wednesday, Mr Cook said he had no fears about ageing, saying he was in a good space both mentally and physically — committing to doing a full term as Premier and contesting the 2029 State election.

At 60, Mr Cook is Australia's oldest Premier. Reminded of that he laughed, saying: "I have never heard that statistic in my life."

"Nowadays, 60 is the new 40, right? We're still fit, we're still young — and we've still got all our teeth. We still have a great passion for our work."

Mr Cook said saying goodbye to his 50s wasn't that tough.

"I'm much more relaxed about turning 60 than I was about turning 50," Mr Cook said.

"I found that (turning 50) really confronting, until someone said, 'it's better than the alternative'."

"Someone described it to me by saying, when you are a young man, you are a warrior, and then you pass through your midlife crisis, and you become the wise old man."

"I am not sure about the wise and old, but you know, I am much more comfortable in my skin today than I was back then (turning 50)."

Coincidentally, the 60-year-milestone coincides with the wedding of his only daughter Isabelle, this weekend.

"August is more about Isabelle than it is about me," Mr Cook said. "Having the opportunity to be surrounded by family and have a celebration of Isabelle's wedding is special."

Mr Cook unexpectedly became Premier when Mark McGowan resigned from politics in 2023.

A massive election win in March this year — winning 46 of 59 seats in the Legislative Assembly — had Labor re-elected for a third term.

But Mr Cook is finding out that being a Premier of a third-term government is tough.

Labor's record on health this week came under severe scrutiny from the media and the Opposition, after damning revelations that important maintenance work at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital was being neglected.

Election promises, such as the building of a \$217 million racetrack and amphitheatre at

Premier Roger Cook this week and, right, in his uni days. Main picture: Jackson Flindell



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WA Premier Roger Cook

Burswood, are also coming under severe scrutiny.

"I don't know if it comes with age, but it certainly comes with experience in the job that you understand that people have got differences of opinion," he said.

"Any representative of a

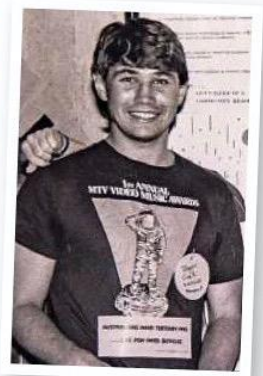
government will have the benefit and the privilege of praise, but obviously it also comes with the other side of that coin. That's just part and parcel of the job.

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History will show that WA has a list of premiers who were north of 60.

Former Liberal premier Colin Barnett was 67 when he lost the premiership in 2017. Former Labor premier John Tonkin was 69 when he became premier in 1971, serving until 1976.

Mr Cook maintains he will contest the 2029 State election



as Premier, despite speculation within his own ranks that he will call time on his political career before that poll.

"Are my ideas still fresh, are my energies still high? Yes, they are," he said. "I will keep doing it (being Premier) while that's the case."

"If you look back over history — in relation to premiers we've had — the 60s were when a lot of them were just building their senior careers. So, from that perspective, I don't see my current situation (turning 60) is reflecting anything on how long I'm going to be doing this."

Mr Cook says life has taught him many lessons. A 60-year-old Roger Cook would tell a 21-year-old Roger Cook: "Be smart. Value the people around you. Build good teams."

He said as he entered a new phase of his life, appreciating loved ones. And making sure loved ones knew how much they were appreciated and loved was vitally important.

"You are more conscious of the relationships that are more important to you," he said.

"You are more conscious of the people who are supporting you like Carly (my wife)."

Mr Cook, who runs and exercises regularly, said looking after his physical and mental health remained high priorities.

"I place a very high emphasis on being physically healthy, because I think that helps you become mentally healthy as well," he said.

As for how Mr Cook will celebrate his 60th, the WA Premier said he'd spend it with his wife, perhaps indulging in a wine or two.

"People keep saying 'have you got a party sorted (for your birthday)'," Mr Cook said. "Carly and I will go out for a nice dinner. I'll celebrate my birthday quietly."