

He's become heavily involved in surfboard production since leaving the pro tour, performing R&D as test pilot for Firewire Surfboards and shaping his own custom boards under the "Munga Weapons" label. And with wife Krista providing the business and marketing drive, their surf school is thriving. It's been another busy morning at the Godfathers of the Ocean surf school, but not before Munga's managed to thread a few dredging Burtleigh barrels at dawn to keep the fire stoked. He acts out one below-sea level cavern in his kitchen as we chat, standing bolt up right through the throat of the beast, arms stretched wide, that ageless grin from ear to ear. "That should keep me going for another couple of weeks," he smiles. Then we sit down to talk story on the back patio of his spacious Reedy Creek acreage home, which he shares with Krista and sons, Kaimana, 9, and Kiam, 7. There's plenty of ground to cover with Munga, many timeless moments from a multi-layered career as free surfer, competitor, shaper and coach, but it's clear Munga's living very much in the present and looking to the future.

So, how's the surf school lifestyle treating you? I probably haven't been doing as much surfing as I'd like but the surf school is keeping me in the water, and gives me an excuse to go down to Burtleigh early and get out there before work.

You're looking pretty fit. After retiring from the surfing circuit I probably wouldn't mind a drink or two every afternoon. I'd probably only have one or two but that was kind of consistent. And it's probably been over a year ago, since my last birthday in August, that my wife and I went, let's really put the hand break on it, I guess. So, I haven't really drunk beer. Over Christmas I've had maybe six. I'll have a beer once every month, a nice little red wine once a week or once a fortnight, and that's been satisfying me. You can't really drink when you've got kids. You wake up with a smashing headache and the kids are jumping all over you. It just doesn't work. I shed probably 5 kg just from stopping drinking, not really much exercise at all, just doing what I do, which is good. How's the surf school going?

Surf school's good. It's been teaching me about running a business, how to deal with staff, how to deal with clients, how the ins and outs work of dealing with the tourism bureau and other tour booking people, large groups, delegating. I've been doing other courses to encompass not only lessons but training coaches, giving kids certification for surf rescues and surf like that. I haven't really just sat there and done the level one. I've done level two, and I'm just finalising one of the courses to make me a level four coach, so I can actually coach other coaches...

I try to look at teaching people how to surf just the way I would do it myself... We get people into it really to have fun. We try and get them up and surfing in the first part of the lesson, and I've got a procedure that is dead set easy.

I won't let that out of the bag, but it comes down to ... an instinctual thing. If people tell themselves they'll stand up, they'll stand up. But if they hesitate, they'll fall down. So, we try and instill that positive thought and not a negative thought, try to really calm them down and basically assist them on to a wave and tell them, look forward. When people look forward they basically let their feet do the work, and they stand up. It's when they look down they fall over. If you look down your mind takes over, not instincts.

It's a funny thing and it's a beautiful thing, because to me surfing ... I haven't found anything better. Once you get that feeling and knowledge of how to do it in the correct way you could die tomorrow and be happy ... I'm stoked. That's what we try to pass on, that feeling. You can do it, give it a go. That confidence.

That must be satisfying. Basically, that's why I've kept with it, coming up to eight years, from complete beginners to intermediates, even guys that have been surfing for ages. There's always something to learn, and even I, as I'm trying to teach them, I'm learning something every wave. Every wave you can actually make something better to better yourself.

Over the last several years I've been reading a lot of motivational books and business books and learning to be more aware of the subconscious, rather than the conscious mind... and I've kind of put that into our lessons ... Some people say to themselves, oh, I don't think I can get up. Well, you only tell yourself what you're going to do, so to change that thought, we tell them to get up and look forward and most of the time they do.

Have you done much elite coaching? I was head coach for Billabong for several years, but haven't done a lot of that for quite a while. There's a few young kids around Burtleigh, there's some potential out there. We've just introduced a training and fitness club. After school we're getting a group of kids together, not only going surfing but teaching them all about stretching, fitness, and start getting them onto a little bit of a roll where they can start doing these things for themselves, and give them a foundation if they want to give it a go in surfing competitions, a grounding. Even if they're not going in surfing competitions, at least they've got some structure for life as in what's good for you and how to deal with yourself fitness-wise and training.

Are you own kids surfing? They are. I've got two goofyfooters. I don't know how that happened. I'm not into pushing them. They want to do what they want to do. I take them out there and they love it but they do other things.

Some of the corporate clients you get must be interesting, stressed out business people flapping around in the ocean, discovering their inner child.



There's different ways to teach every individual, and a lot of times when they can't stand up it's all this frustration or built up anger or fear ... So when we're out in the water we actually hold the board and talk to them in a way that's uplifting, motivating. We calm them down, relax them, get them to breathe properly, in through the nose and out through the mouth. A lot of people don't breathe properly and that's why they just freak out, try and fight the board, and tense up. Some people are just scared of the water.

You must see a lot of people go through quite a change through their first surfing experience. I seriously reckon if you sat down and wrote a book about it and analysed what you learnt in surfing, I say this to a lot of people, you actually can learn a lot about life... It's amazing. I totally believe that - your reaction time, how you weigh up a situation, trusting yourself, your instincts. One of the things that we say when they're learning is, where you look is where you go. So you focus on where you want to go. And goals - what do you want to do? Stand up and go forward and end up stepping off on the beach. Well, tell yourself that's what you're going to do, let's do it, one, two, three, go. And 97% of the time they stand up and ride the wave. It's amazing when you actually tell yourself and tell your mind to shut up and listen to your instincts and your subconscious. It's a key that opens up the door. Some people have padlocks and chains ... (laughs) I think it comes down to what we're made up of. Our body's matter and we're built of energy. We're just a ball of energy. ... What's the ocean? It's all energy. A wave is pure energy. If you actually connect with the wave and be a positive with the energy of the wave you become a part of the wave, and most of the time people stand up straight away. When they're tense or thinking about it, it's all negative ... and it works against the wave. Like the grain in wood, you can't go against the grain.

To find out more go to: www.godfathersoftheocean.com

Surf pic by Wilba, Burtleigh Cove