

After three decades in the spotlight, Amanda Keller has plenty of material for her memoirs!

# Amanda Keller

# I was so awkward

The TV and radio star reflects on her journey from 'daggy' adolescent to media powerhouse

**C**onfident, courageous, funny and with top-rating TV and radio shows under her belt, at 53 Amanda Keller seemingly has it all – a loving husband, two healthy young sons and an enviable career. But it wasn't always that way.

When *New Idea* sits down with the bubbly personality, she reveals that the discovery of her teenage diaries have reminded her of just how far she's come. They were also the catalyst for her new book, *Natural Born Keller*, a memoir detailing her journey from a childhood in suburban Brisbane to one of the country's most in-demand stars.

'Here I am in my early 50s and I'm seeing my life play out on paper,' she tells *New Idea*. 'All those questions you ask as a teen: Who will I be? Will I find someone to love me? Will I find a job? Reliving my early dagginess has been really interesting.'

It's hard to believe that this confident woman could be anything resembling 'daggy', yet the self-confessed hapless teen of her youth plays an important part in keeping Amanda grounded.

'I use her as a touchstone to be grateful,' she says. 'Sometimes if I'm stressed prepping for a big celebrity interview, I think of my 14-year-old self, who would think how lucky

I am to have this career. A young Amanda would have loved to know that I'd end up where I am and with a man who loves me – despite all of the imperfections that I saw in myself at the time.'

Thankfully, teenage Amanda's insecurities about finding love proved to be unfounded. She met and married her husband, Harley Oliver, 25 years ago. However, it wasn't an instant 'happily ever after' for the couple.

Early on in their relationship, Harley revealed that he'd had a vasectomy 10 years before. After undergoing a reversal, the pair assumed that children would follow – but that was merely the first stumbling block on their road to parenthood. What followed was years of IVF treatment, a journey that Amanda only revealed to a select few. To the outside world, she retained her laugh-a-minute persona but, inside, she remembers this period as one of the unhappiest of her life.

'It was the lowest point for me. Doing breakfast radio, the alarm would go off very early in the morning and – following on from bad news I received the day before – I'd think: "This is the worst." On the flipside, it didn't allow me to dwell, I just had to get up and keep moving.'

Adopting a 'head down, bum up' attitude helped her through the emotional and physical roller-coaster – 'I just got on with it and tried to feel hopeful,' she recounts – and eventually the vivacious media personality ▶

HIGHS  
AND  
LOWS



Despite 'early dagginess' as a teen, Amanda found success as a TV presenter on *Beyond 2000* (above left), where she met future husband Harley Oliver. After undergoing IVF, they had sons Liam and Jack (top left).

Since 2005, Amanda has been sharing the airwaves with co-host Brendan Jones (left).

got her wish, giving birth to her first child, Liam, at the age of 39 and then, two years later, her second boy, Jack.

Looking back now, the reality of life without children is a prospect she can't even fathom.

'It just seems like the most natural thing in the world – having these two little humans living with us. Even though my oldest is 14, I still get a thrill knowing I have them. I wish I'd known during those years we were trying that everything would be OK.'

Working in breakfast radio for a large portion of her career has meant that Amanda has long been accustomed to utilising her day-to-day life as on-air fodder. 'You do have to share a lot of your life,' she says. 'I don't have a problem talking about myself, but I do have some boundaries about what I will or won't say.'

Although she's admittedly open, those boundaries dropped even lower during the process of putting pen to paper. It was a cathartic experience – particularly when it came to

reliving the death of her mother, who passed away 10 years ago.

'I dreaded writing that chapter,' she reflects. 'I put it off for ages, but it ended up being one of the easiest chapters to write. Looking back, I feel bad for every time I asked her: "What's for dinner?" and then rolled my eyes. Or for being mortified at the clothes she made me wear,' she says, tearing up. 'Part of the book for me is to say thanks to Mum

***'It was the lowest point for me... [but] it didn't allow me to dwell. I just had to get up and keep moving'***

and that I get it... I get what you were doing when you made those funny jumpers. That was your way of saying you loved me and I understand that now.'

It's undoubtedly her resilience and positivity that have been the backbone of Amanda's 30-year media career. Beginning as a regular on Ray Martin's *Midday* show in the mid-80s, it was *Beyond 2000* that made her a household name. During her six years on the science show, she

reported from all over the world, notching up a slew of journalism awards in the process. A five-year stint as one of the country's leading breakfast radio duos on Triple M followed and she continued to prove her TV

enthusiastically: 'Maybe! The hours are very family-friendly.' But if the job did end, a typically upbeat Amanda sees a silver lining. 'There's always the upside that if you get axed, you'll get a sleep-in,' she giggles.

While she's kicked plenty of goals, there is still one remaining professional aspiration for this talented all-rounder.

'I'd love to have a crack at serious acting,' she enthuses. 'I haven't yet, because of my day job, but that's a dream of mine – a dream that I'd love to come true.' She adds, laughing, 'I'll be in that *Home And Away* diner before you know it!'

By Paul Ewart **NI**

prohess in both the Logie Award-winning series *Talkin' 'Bout Your Generation* and Channel Ten's ongoing *The Living Room*. But it's Amanda's longest-running gig – as co-host of WFSM's *Jonesy & Amanda* – that holds a special place in her heart.

'Radio is so addictive. It's hard because it's unrelenting, whether you're hungover, tired or sick – it doesn't matter. But I love it.'

Quizzed about whether she'll do another 10 years, she replies

**Amanda Keller's memoir, *Natural Born Keller* (Allen & Unwin, \$29.99), is out now.**

