

# Rowena Wallace

# I'm finally driving at 65!

The star has a new lease of life thanks to her mobility scooter

**D**espite the ongoing agony of debilitating back pain, TV trouper Rowena Wallace is now smiling after receiving the surprise gift of a mobility scooter for her 65th birthday!

'It's an absolute godsend!' says the five-time Logie-winning legend. 'The truth is, a lifetime of chronic back issues had taken such a terrible toll, it was now an excruciating ordeal just to go to the supermarket.'

Rowena says not only is she now having a hoot zipping down

to the shops on her snazzy scooter, it's also given her such a new lease on life – she's even puttering down to meet friends for coffee.

'I was diagnosed with scoliosis [a progressive spinal disorder] in the '60s. Adding to the torment, I've also suffered with several prolapsed discs. My back is now so contorted, I permanently lurch to the right,' Rowena admits.

'That's why I often wear huge jackets – it's my trick for disguising a hunched back and a distinct lean to one side...

'Walking is now painfully difficult and, as a result, I was rarely leaving the house. I wasn't catching up with friends because taking taxis is too expensive. My new scooter is like a lifeline – it's Christmas!' she says, smiling.

As a bonus, Rowena reveals being in the driver's seat means she's notched up another thrilling milestone.

'Until now, I've never driven anything – 45 years ago I started taking driving lessons while living in Brisbane,' she says. 'But I was offered a TV role in Sydney – in *You Can't See Round Corners* – so I packed up and left and never got around to driving.'

'It's exhilarating to finally be behind the wheel – even if it's a mobility scooter,' she laughs. 'Thankfully they're speed limited,

otherwise I'm sure I'd be a leadfoot!'

The still gorgeous actress joins an estimated

100,000 Australians currently using mobility scooters according to Scooters Australia.

'Someone asked me the other day if I'm embarrassed to be seen puttering around on my scooter... are you kidding? Not for a second! I love her!' Rowena laughs.

'She's become a member of the family so much so I've named her Rosie and my two dogs, Phoebe and Rebus, are very intrigued.'

The showbiz stalwart, who is celebrating 47 years as a performer, says despite her pain and disability, she's certainly not retired. 'I love working, and when I'm not I miss the buzz and vibe.'

Rowena says despite her past high-profile, leading lady 'glamour' roles like arch TV bitch 'Pat the Rat' she's now content to play character roles like grandmothers and murderers.

'And if the role called for a murderous granny with a hunched back on a scooter, then I'm the perfect fit!' she laughs in her famous throaty tones.

By Craig Bennett

Photos: Tina Smigelski

The Aussie star's embracing her new scooter – much to her beloved dogs' amusement!

