



Carer Lesley Field has benefitted greatly from using the Carer Gateway

# Lesley's caring role

LESLEY Field, 67, has been a carer for her daughter Amy, who has mental ill health, for the past 17 years.

Lesley says her responsibilities include preparing meals, personal care, taking Amy to appointments with GPs and health institutions, navigating support services, and meeting loved ones.

She says it is a hard job with long hours, no pay and traditionally no support system.

On top of her caring role, Lesley has her own health complications. She suffers from a disease called bronchiectasis - a rare genetic condition where the walls of the bronchi are thickened

from inflammation and infection - along with chronic fatigue.

Lesley is one of more than 80,000 Tasmanian unpaid informal carers of a loved one with disability, mental ill health, chronic or life-limiting condition, drug or alcohol dependence or who is frail or aged.

Across the 17 years that Lesley has been a carer for her daughter, her experience of accessing support was hard to navigate because services were spread across many different organisations doing similar things but in different ways.

"As a carer, your time is not your own. I spend all day supporting my

daughter with almost every part of her life, and there is almost no time left for me," Lesley said.

"Before Carer Gateway, I found I often got lost in the maze of different services and hoops I had to jump through.

"Carer Gateway is like a breath of fresh air. One phone number and one website."

Carer Gateway is an Australian Government initiative designed to bring all supports into a single service with one service provider. Care2Serve, the service arm of Carers Tasmania, is the provider for Tasmania.

The Carer Gateway

helps family and friend carers to navigate the services, such as My Aged Care and NDIS, and provides referrals, plus a range of other supports such as free counselling and coaching, connection with other carers in the same situation, coordination of residential respite, and tailored support packages.

"Since Carer Gateway launched in the middle of the pandemic, we have been able to support thousands of carers across Tasmania," Care2Serve and Carers Tasmania CEO David Brennan said.

"Carers often tell us how much simpler it is

to call one number and find out about all the supports available to help them in their caring roles.

"Many don't see themselves wearing a carer's hat, as well as being a parent, child, sibling, grandparent, grandchild or neighbour.

"In Tasmania, one in six people are a carer. Many families are caring for someone and don't know that we are here to help."

Lesley has been able to access support through Carer Gateway that has improved her capacity to provide care for Amy.

"The support I received through counselling greatly

assisted me in coping with the stresses of being a carer," she said.

"Amy recently contracted COVID, leading her to become very frail, as she now lives with her fiancé who suffers from mental health issues as well.

"I often take carer role for both of them, sometimes via phone as I have limited movement due to the pandemic.

"Since I am immune suppressed, I don't leave home often. Many carers in my circle, who I have met through carer workshops over the years are worried about catching COVID too.

"I recently became aware of the COVID help at Carer Gateway.

This is a sigh of relief. If something happens to us carers, they can help us with groceries, medication, accessing RATs and putting us through to the right services.

"I recommended anyone who is a friend or family carer caring for someone to get on the phone and speak to them. They'll help you with any questions you may have or guide you in the right direction."

If you are in a similar situation and need help with your caring role, contact Carer Gateway. Contact 1800 422 737 (and select 1 from the menu) or check the website at [www.carergateway.gov.au](http://www.carergateway.gov.au)