



Carer Sujata Das Gupta (centre right) with her daughter (left) and parents at home

Care2Serve is a gateway to respite for carers like Sujata

SUPPORT from a Tasmanian provider has allowed a Glenorchy resident to maintain her own wellbeing while caring for both her parents and her daughter.

"For the past 18 years I have been the primary carer for my adult daughter," Sujata said.

"My daughter needs a lot of guidance and encouragement with her day-to-day activities.

"So, a lot of my energy goes into making sure she is occupied with meaningful activities.

"With my parents aging, my caring role has shifted to them too. My father has dementia, and my mother is hard of hearing."

Sujata has been living

with her parents for more than a decade but over the years she has found they have become increasingly dependent on her.

Sujata is one of more than 80,000 Tasmanian 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.

In fact, Tasmania's carer ratio is the highest in the nation at 1:6.

Taking on the role of caring for her parents was an easy decision for Sujata, but their growing dependency hasn't come without challenges.

"They are very reliant on me for their everyday needs," she

said.

"While they still try to help me around the house, they constantly need my support with shopping, organising and attending appointments and managing their finances.

"I always need to let them know where I am going and when I will be back. Without me, I don't know what they would do."

Eighteen years ago, when Sujata's daughter's health worsened, she was referred to Carers Tasmania, the peak body for unpaid family and friend carers in Tasmania.

Care2Serve, the service arm of Carers Tasmania, is the local Tasmanian provider of carer support

services through Carer Gateway, an Australian Government initiative developed to provide carers with advice and information and a range of tailored support packages.

Carer Gateway runs free workshops and retreats to support and assists carers in their caring role.

"Over the years, I have attended multiple workshops and retreats run by Carer Gateway," Sujata said.

"All the workshops I have attended have been excellent. You get to connect with other carers, share your story and form a good support network.

"Participating in these sessions has completely changed my outlook

and aided me in my caring role.

"These sessions enabled me to start my own support group with other carers."

Sujata looks after herself by attending the gym, gardening, doing ballroom dancing, teaching Indian dancing and performing for the community and volunteering at a local school.

"If you don't look after yourself, how can you find the energy to care for someone else?" she said.

Sujata also receives free counselling as part of Carer Gateway services.

"The counsellors I have spoken with over the years have been fantastic, and I find

these services are really helpful," she said.

"When I walk out of a session with one of the counsellors, I feel like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders.

"The team there also contacts me regularly to see how I am going.

"My daughter and I are planning to take a trip to the mainland sometime in the future, something we haven't done as my caring role for my parents doesn't allow it."

Going away on a trip is not a challenge anymore, as Carer Gateway provides carers access to respite care.

"We are glad Carer Gateway provides respite care," Sujata said. "What else can I say? I am thankful to the

Carer Gateway for all they do for the carers.

"They have made it possible for me to connect with other carers in similar situations and share my caring role.

"I recommended anyone who is a friend or family carer caring for someone ill, frail or aged 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