



Rosa Connell says being a part-time carer for her elderly parents is a rewarding yet exhausting role

Carer Gateway is helping carers navigate the maze

ROSA Connell lives in Sandy Bay and has been a part-time carer of elderly parents for the last five years while managing her demanding work schedule.

She says it is a rewarding yet exhausting role.

Rosa is one of the 80,000 Tasmanian informal carers of a loved one with a disability, mental ill health, chronic or life-limiting condition or 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.

"My dad has vascular dementia, and my mum has complex mobility needs and chronic pain,"

Rosa said.

"My husband is quite supportive of my caring role while I physically tend to my parents, coordinate their medical appointments, manage their household and admin needs.

"It is an ever-increasing role. I do this so they can remain in their own home."

Tasmania is ageing faster than mainland states and it is common for informal family carers to be caring for someone over 65 years of age. In fact, as the average age of carers is 55 years, it is equally common for many carers to be older themselves.

Rosa's caring role started when she noticed her dad struggling to complete

routine tasks. It escalated quickly when her mum suffered a series of fractures.

"I was recommended to Carer Gateway by the Aged Care Assessment team when I first started to care for my parents formally," Rosa said.

"During an emergency, when mum had a fall and broke her wrist, Carer Gateway was there to provide the much-needed support and respite.

"They organised a care support worker to look after my dad while we spent time with mum in the RHH emergency department.

"They organise in-home respite and help my parents get ready for bed and feel settled in

the evening.

"Having the care support worker at home to assist mum and dad takes a lot of weight off my shoulders."

Care2Serve, the service arm of Carers Tasmania, is the local Tasmania 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.

Through Carer Gateway, carers can now access vital services including coordinated support in residential aged care facilities, connection with other carers, advice and information on planning

for the future, tailored support packages, free access to counselling, and personalised sessions with a specialised carer coach.

"I have found the team at Carer Gateway to always be compassionate and willing to help families, even though their resources must be stretched," Rosa said.

"My sister and I took the opportunity to receive free counselling with the professional counsellors at Carer Gateway and found they were very compassionate and supportive.

"In times of crisis, whenever I have called them, they have been very understanding and have been a source of

tremendous support."

Carers often find it difficult to navigate the maze of social services networks and get lost trying to find the right information and department.

"I cannot imagine my parents being able to navigate these systems independently," Rosa said.

"By having a single phone number and website, Carer Gateway has made it easier for carers to access information, advice and support.

"I feel supported in my role, and I am thankful that Carer Gateway is here to assist the many unpaid carers in our communities.

"I read somewhere that 'the true measure

of a civilised society is revealed by how it treats its elderly and most vulnerable'.

"I hope everyone will recognise and genuinely value the role family carers play.

"I recommend 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 will 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 visit the website at www.carergateway.gov.au