



15 NOV, 2023

Behind the Eyes of a Carer

Naracoorte Community News, Naracoorte

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Behind the Eyes of a Carer

by RESTHAVEN

Resthaven Manager Service Development, Tam Henwood, is passionate about the Staying at Home in Regional South Australia Program.

As the primary carer of her mother, Tam's involvement with the initiative is not exclusive to the office, having participated in a retreat earlier this year with her mother who lives with dementia.

Tam explains, "The Staying at Home Program is a very special experience. It's really a gift."

"The day-to-day of caring for a person living with dementia is challenging, and often across a variety of wellbeing domains.

"Considerations need to be made regarding the physical environments, social connections, spirituality, and psychological wellbeing—for both the carer and the person living with dementia."

"This program allows carers to truly check-in with how they are feeling, reflect on their experience as a carer, and to make plans for positive change—oftentimes difficult when you are in the day-to-day of caring."

"The biggest goal I had for my mother during the program, who has mixed-type dementia (vascular dementia and Alzheimer's disease), was to be introduced to a cottage-style respite service; one that could continue after the program, giving her access to engaging social support."

"Mum's lack of meaningful engagement has, I think, contributed to the relatively dramatic change in her cognition over the past 18 months. I hoped that the retreat could change the narrative for her,

around her diagnosis."

"An objective of the program

is to reduce carer burden, which for me, proved complex.

"I thoroughly enjoyed the uninterrupted time with Mum, but in reality, I also juggle other responsibilities, such as being the primary caregiver for another family member and working full-time.

"I am very fortunate to have a supportive family, so this is something we will work towards improving, with the knowledge gained from the program."

Tam reflects, "I try to take each day as it comes, knowing how much more challenging caring could be.

"However, as Mum's lack of capacity to make educated decisions is waning, and her disinhibition and risk-taking is increasing, I do worry about what the burden over the mid to long term will be, as she continues to live independently."

"I strongly believe in my mum's human right to have agency over her life and decisions, and I am now constantly reconsidering the

amount of input and support I offer her."

"Dignity of risk is important, along with personal choice, ensuring we have as much unobtrusive means to support her continued independence.

"We do this with assistive technology—a watch to geolocate and alert of falls, a tablet with electronic diary management that she can view on her kitchen bench for reminders and appointments, and daily calls to ensure correct medications are administered."

"Also, we support her financial dignity through an online app and ensure the bulk of her funds are not available on her card (if lost/stolen), all with the view to care and "protect," but also allow as much choice and control as she wants."

"Being a carer of someone living with dementia presents various challenges, and this program is a step forward in confronting those challenges—recognising that carers need support too, and with respite, they can continue in the caring role for longer."



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If you are carer, or know someone who is, visit the [Staying at Home Program page](https://www.resthaven.asn.au/staying-at-home-program/) and discover the support available to you:

<https://www.resthaven.asn.au/staying-at-home-program/>
Phone us on (08) 8198 2088 or email us on SAHRSA@resthaven.asn.au

The Staying at Home in Regional South Australia program forms part of the Government's response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, and aims to provide vital education and support to carers whilst their loved one is cared for in the same location by experienced staff.

Established in 1935, Resthaven is a South Australian not-for-profit aged care community service associated with the Uniting Church in Australia.

Every day, Resthaven shares the lives and wisdom of older people and their carers, opening doors to the full range of aged care service options available.

Services are provided throughout metropolitan Adelaide, the Adelaide Hills, Murraylands, Riverland, Fleurieu Peninsula, lower Barossa region and the Limestone Coast of South Australia.



Tam Henwood's mum