

## Case Study: Andy Caring for His Ageing Father

Andy, a retired GP in Port Macquarie, is the fulltime carer for his 98-year-old father. His experience demonstrates the realities of ageing, loss of independence, and the need for early planning and carer support.



### Background

- Retired UK trained GP (40 years).
- Two brothers live overseas; Andy and his wife share caring duties.
- Father lived independently until his 90s.
- He moved to Australia after a poor experience with aged care in the UK.

### Caring Experience

#### Increasing Needs Over Time

- Cognitive decline, worsening hearing and vision.
- Frequent falls and skin tears.
- Reduced insight into safety and daily functioning.
- Increasing need for help with meals, showering, and routine.

#### Emotional Impact

- Father struggles with losing independence after a lifetime of control.
- Andy manages repeated conversations, frustration, and safety concerns.
- Requires constant patience and relationship reframing.

#### Lifestyle Effects

Andy and his wife can no longer:

- Travel spontaneously.
- Leave home for long periods.
- Rely on their previous retirement plans.

Still, they remain committed to supporting his father at home.

#### Support Systems

- Strong support from his wife.
- Good relationship with father's GP.
- My Aged Care accessed early—services assessed and ready when needed.
- Andy's medical background avoids unnecessary ED visits.

**Gap:** No clinician has checked in on Andy's wellbeing as a carer.

#### Challenges for Health Professionals

- Carers with clinical training or high health literacy appear to be coping well, but may struggle with burnout.
- Carers may mask fatigue, stress, or overwhelm to stay positive and protective in the presence of the patient.
- Carers often hesitate to share concerns in the patient's presence for fear of seeming disloyal, ungrateful, or like the caring role is a burden.
- Many carers are a spouse, partner, parent, child, or friend first and foremost. They don't see themselves as a 'carer', leading to missed opportunities for support.

#### What Health Professionals Can Do

- Start early conversations about future care, safety, and planning.
- Schedule **private** check-ins with carers.
- Normalise respite and home safety reviews.
- Use a team based approach (GP, nurse, allied health).

### Conclusion

Although demanding, Andy finds caring for his father meaningful and full of purpose. Preserving dignity and planning early have been key. Despite the challenges, he says he would "do it all again."