



Northern Beaches councillor and deputy mayor, Sue Heins, is a full-time carer to her beloved husband, Nigel.

## Sue's strength

By Maxwell White  
and Stephanie Aikins

**Sue Heins is well-known among these pages for her work as a Northern Beaches councillor and the newly appointed deputy mayor. But alongside her incredible workload as a local politician, there's another role she pours her heart and soul into daily.**

For six years, Sue has been a carer for her beloved husband, Nigel.

"My caring role has been gradual," the Davidson local tells *North Shore Living*.

"Originally, I was supporting Nigel through a heavy cancer journey which required five operations. I was very hands on and at home or driving to endless appointments, but now it is different.

"With a prognosis of Parkinson's it is usually a slow, progressive disease. Parkinson's Plus is a much faster progression."

Now, alongside her demanding duties as a local representative, Sue's daily life consists of setting up meals,

laying out medications and watching out for the symptoms and behaviours pursuant to Parkinson's Plus.

"I have been a councillor for many years, so I have routines with Nigel that he is very used to," she explains.

"My biggest challenge was being worried about him falling when I was away. Thanks to technology, I am hooked up to him via his watch and am messaged when he has a fall. I can speak to him through his watch to check on his welfare. This has addressed one of my biggest fears.

"Caring is a situation where you start to move away from being a friend, a relation, husband, wife, or sibling to taking responsibility for aspects of that person's life to ensure they are living a life as comfortable as possible.

"It's a challenging transition. One that starts with positivity in addressing various challenges and, depending on the health challenges, can be exhausting and overwhelming as the carer's job never ends.

"Every day is different, and I am acutely aware of carer burnout."

While her humility may make her stop short of accepting the title 'superwoman', Sue says there are many aspects of caring that make the role incredibly rewarding.

"When the sun and the moon align, I see Nigel can be so

well. He is his old cheeky self again," she says.

"Times when we meet up with friends and they enjoy the cheekiness and wisecracks. This gives me joy and keeps me going."

Sue has been receiving support through local charity Your Side Australia's Carer Gateway services, which include counselling and peer support, respite care and short-term financial aid.

The charity also provides specialised services for young carers, including tutoring and even driving lessons.

"Carers burnout is real, and I know my strengths and weaknesses. Carer Gateway has been a lifeline when things are tough," Sue says.

"It's hard for friends to understand what a carer is feeling as it can make for a boring conversation about the same topic, over and over again. I am a pragmatic person; I was looking originally for solutions.

"Carer Gateway had an emergency care plan for if something happened to me, and what information needed to be documented for someone to take over. It also has different services available, including emergency respite if you need help."

With one in 10 Australians currently unpaid carers, many of whom do so without support, Sue recommends impacted locals get in touch with Your Side to learn about the services available.

"Being with others who know the journey you are walking is invaluable," she says.

"Don't wait until you are at crisis point or burnout as a carer - reach out and build your support network around you now."

Locals can call the Carer Gateway (through Your Side Australia) on 1800 422 737. **N**

## Take the stress out of moving house



Local to the North Shore, business owners Kiera and Nyrie

### WHO WE HELP

We specialise in helping the elderly transition to their new home, offering an empathetic, trustworthy and caring professional service.

### WHAT WE DO

We meet, we quote, we pack, we sort, we reduce, we recycle, we donate, we declutter, we unpack, we clean and we help you settle in.

**10% DISCOUNT**  
FOR THE FIRST 10 CLIENTS



**From House To Home**

**Call us today 9981 5988**  
[www.fromhousetohome.com.au](http://www.fromhousetohome.com.au)