

Case Study: Value for money in the long run

Bringing Brenda home

Brenda had a stroke just over three years ago and before that Brenda and Malcolm had been completely independent. It came as quite a shock and the family needed to rally around and provide as much support as they could. Brenda was in hospital for some time but Malcolm and the family felt strongly that home was the place to be and that a variety of arrangements needed to be made to make sure that happened. A complete redesign of the bathroom was necessary and the Hospital Occupational Therapist was very useful in helping the design. Overall the Hospital was fantastic in the information that they provided so that plans could be made to bring Brenda home.

This transition period was somewhat frustrating and expensive, however after some rehab, a short term nursing home arrangement was found and our son made the many phone calls to try and establish the care we needed. Initially it looked like it might be at least a 6 month waiting time for the package. But we took a day at a time and renovated the bathroom so that Brenda could come home. It took 6 weeks to renovate the bathroom and hence the short term stay in the Nursing Home worked out well.

Initially when Brenda came home they didn't have any support. They had been approved for a Level 4 package but initial costs were in the vicinity of \$1000 a week, for a number of weeks. Their savings were not going to last very long at that rate, but soon a package became available and they were able to put in place the supports that were needed. Brenda was completely paralysed down the left side, which presented many functional issues, however having the direct care worker has made such a difference and been wonderful. The worker has been with them for almost 3 years and has virtually become a part of the family. This consistent care has been invaluable as has the electric wheel chair that enables Brenda to get around the house.

Malcolm has been Brenda's fulltime carer and been able to get the small allowance and that has been very helpful. The most difficult part of the experience has been living with the feelings of uncertainty. They highlighted that they took a real chance in bringing Brenda home for the trial period and they recognise that in time they will have to consider future scenarios as well. On reflection, our son has been very helpful making all those calls to the phone numbers given to us by the Hospital. Brenda highlighted when asked about what was puzzling, she commented "in my mind it would be very helpful to have one place where you could access all of those phone numbers and better still have someone like a broker who could do it for you". Malcolm suggested, "a person with a social worker background would have been handy".

The other thing that Malcolm and Brenda suggested was that everyone when they turn 70 should receive a booklet that would let them know that they should be prepared for every scenario, like having a stroke. It would be a booklet with helpful numbers to contact and information for carers.

The other thing that they have found very helpful has been short term respite provided by the nursing home. They have found it very useful once when Malcolm needed to go to hospital himself and was unable to be the carer and the other time when Malcolm returned home to the UK for a visit and a holiday which was very important.

Overall Malcolm and Brenda wanted to highlight that the resources and help provided has been wonderful and the assistance provided excellent. The fees payed mostly get added onto the income and provide further support. We could pay more at a stretch but this feels just about right for now.