

Stroke Foundation Awards - Courage Award 2016



Carol Fuller – a Courage finalist

Adelaide resident Carol Fuller's life changed dramatically when her husband Clive had a massive stroke at just 50 years.

The severe and, at times, all-consuming nature of Clive's condition following his stroke severely impacted both their lives.

Carol found herself juggling the roles of wife, mother, carer and advocate. She learnt to live from one changing day to the next. Carol fought daily to ensure Clive received everything available to help him live a life of quality and dignity. She also advocated to government for policy changes to prevent Clive and other stroke survivors from falling through the cracks in the health system.

Carol wrote a book about their experiences which she hopes to publish shortly to encourage and help others in their stroke journey. Her family and friends say Carol is a courageous woman and an inspiration, and being recognised as a finalist is a lovely tribute to her life with Clive, who sadly passed away in 2012.

[Read our interview with Carol Fuller](#)

Carol Fuller interview

What does it mean to you to be named a finalist in the Stroke Awards?

I am humbled to be considered as one of the finalists. It is an honour to represent all carers who have undertaken the role of caring for their loved ones or friends when they could no longer care for themselves. Caring is something which comes from the heart: a special act of love.

How has stroke impacted your life?

When my husband Clive suffered his stroke at 50 years of age, it changed not only his world but also mine and that of our two girls: Penelope and Sarah. We realised our lives would never be the same again; we learnt to live our lives another way. Without warning I was catapulted into the middle of the change, to be guided by my instincts, and learnt to live from one changing day to another, forever being on guard for the next emergency.

It was difficult to identify and engage appropriate services to ensure Clive was able to rehabilitate to 'the best he could get'. He was no longer independent, Clive became a dependant, on me his wife/carer/advocate for his very existence. Our duties reversed, I became the breadwinner, therapy assistant, nurse assistant, psychiatrist, speech assistant: the most important role of all - his carer. One could say a Jill of all trades and perhaps a mistress of none. It was a role I carried out with pride.

Why is raising awareness about stroke important to you?

Strokes are life-changing to everyone concerned, sometimes fatal. Strokes are not selective of gender, status or age, they can happen to anyone at any time. The legacies from a stroke are as individual to that person as their finger print – there are no two strokes alike. The outward physical signs of the stroke are obvious, but many people aren't aware or prepared for what lies hidden beneath, the elements that determine the severity of the stroke. It is important to maintain a healthy lifestyle and seek immediate help when something seems 'not quite right.'

What inspired you in your recovery?

I was always inspired by Clive's total commitment to his therapy regime, he wanted to get himself 'as best as he could' to enable him to get the most out of his changed life. I was also inspired by our two daughters who stood by their Dad during his difficult times, some of which were crisis situations. Clive always gave of himself, he was compassionate to others in their time of need; extremely grateful for what was offered and took nothing for granted. Although his stroke was severe, robbing him of language, he didn't dwell on the downside; he has a cheeky humour and could flash his wonderful smile; a smile that spoke a thousand words. I stand in awe of what he achieved. He inspired me to write a book on our journey together.

What is one thing you would like people to know about stroke?

It is not the end of life; it is the beginning of a new chapter in life. There is hope and life after stroke. Never give up because you have had a stroke!

Source: Stroke Foundation: <https://strokefoundation.com.au/What-we-do/National-Stroke-Foundation-Awards/Courage-Award>