



PROUDLY SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH
ALL NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Ian Carmichael's Story

Riding a bike is good exercise, and a feel-good activity, but cycling along Western Australia's beautiful coastline is something Ian Carmichael doesn't take for granted. He rode in MSWA's Ocean Ride last year to honour two of his loved ones, who both lived with a neurological condition.

Ian was working in the Royal Navy in 1989 when his father was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease (MND) in the United Kingdom (UK). "I was based offshore which made contact difficult and I had to travel a lot to be with my parents. Dad's first symptoms were loss of co-ordination whilst doing simple things, and then the condition progressed from there," said Ian. Having had no real awareness of MND, his family didn't know what to expect, and as each week went by it was a learning curve accompanied by plenty of sadness.

Family and friends gathered around the Carmichael family, but it was difficult to process. Ian said, "this diagnosis was devastating, and the idea that there was no recovery made it feel like we were living on borrowed time."

As his father neared the end of his battle with MND, Ian was flown home to be with his family. Sadly, he passed away two to three weeks later at the age of 60, only one year after his diagnosis. "This point of my life was a struggle and time with my dad passed too quickly. I still have feelings of regret for missed opportunities, but I'm thankful I got to say goodbye," Ian said.

Looking back on this time is hard for Ian, but upon reflection he is inspired by his mothers' strength and courage, as she single handedly cared for his dad. There was no respite or care support offered at the time in the UK, which was difficult both physically and mentally for her.

Another blow came to his family in 2014, "mum was visiting me in Australia two years ago when she started having symptoms of paralysis on her left side, speech problems and disorientation. It was confirmed in hospital that she'd had a stroke and stayed in the country until she was well enough to go home," said Ian.

Norma's condition meant frequent travel back to the UK, which caused financial and emotional stress on his family, but it was time worth spent. When he did visit, she would get confused and communicating was difficult. Prior to her stroke, she was a healthy and fit 72-year-old that was actively engaged with a walking club.

"Mum was living in a nursing home full-time, where she received 24-hour care and was confined to wheel chair. In May she had another stroke and we lost her eight days later. I find it hard not being able to talk to her anymore and I feel guilty that I was so far away," Ian said.



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Since both of Ian's parents lived in the UK he doesn't have a personal connection to MSWA, however he felt that the MSWA Ocean Ride was a very worthy event to support. He appreciates that MSWA supports both those who are living with a neurological condition and their families.

Ian said, "The MSWA Ocean Ride has allowed me to contribute to another family's journey. I'm proud to assist MSWA in raising vital funds which contribute to investing in research, building new facilities, and purchasing essential equipment made accessible for people living with a neurological condition. This is achievable thanks to fantastic fundraising events like the Ocean Ride."

"The support that MSWA provides during an incredibly stressful and challenging time, is invaluable. You too can be a part of the MSWA Ocean Ride by getting on your bike, sponsoring a rider or even cheering us across the finish line on the day. This year the Ride will be dedicated to my mum," he added.