



Don Mciver at home in Ryde with his wife Lyn, who was asked many times to turn off his life-support system.

BRENT MCGILVARY -PP409607

# Royal Rehab was the key to stroke victim's survival

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WHEN Don Maciver had a stroke in 1999, he remained in an induced coma at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital for nearly three months.

The doctors and nurses had given up on the Ryde resident, and asked his wife, Lyn, about organ donation, suggesting several times that it was time to turn off the life support system because he was "unrehabilitatable".

"One morning, not long after we were first married, Don and I had an argument," Mrs Maciver said.

"Don went off to work and I was upset at home, and then at lunchtime, the doorbell rang and there was Don, standing there with this huge bunch of flowers, he'd come all the way home on the train in his lunch break to bring

them to me. Every time doctors asked me to turn off life support, I just saw Don standing there with that bunch of flowers.

"I told him later, 'that bunch of flowers saved your life'."

But it wasn't just the fear of losing her husband that kept Mrs Maciver fighting to save him.

She spent months by his bedside, playing music and talking and Mr Maciver had begun to respond, squeezing the hand of his wife and showing other small signs of improvement.

"The doctors wouldn't believe me," Mrs Maciver said. "Every time they asked Don to blink or squeeze their hand, he wouldn't do it, but the moment they left the room he would respond to me.

"It was so depressing."

But Mrs Maciver didn't give up

hope that someone could help and after some research she discovered Royal Sydney Rehabilitation Centre in Ryde.

Mrs Maciver said without Royal Rehab, her husband, a former Australian championship rower and healthy man, would not have pulled through.

Mr Maciver can now walk, has sailed solo, paints, reads and is a member of social clubs, and most importantly, has lived to hold his grandchildren in his arms.

Both Mr and Mrs Maciver said they were distressed to find out recently that Royal Rehab was having their funding cut and was at risk of losing specialised staff and vital services.

"What happened once we got to Royal Rehab is that we finally felt safe," Mrs Maciver said. "They

look after the person and they look after that person's family.

"They were open to alternatives and let me bring in a massage therapist and an acupuncturist.

"The Royal Rehab staff are highly specialised, caring people trained in speech pathology and physiotherapy, they were all unbelievably professional and there is nothing else like it here."

She is concerned that local, state and federal politicians have turned a blind eye to the hospital's plight, even though 26 staff cuts across administration have already occurred.

"My concern is that very good public facilities like Royal Rehab are being privatised by stealth, and you can bet your bottom dollar they will lose consummate staff if that happens," she said.