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Andy, from Penrith, brings joy to those around him. In turn, they support him to live a good life, surrounded by love and free from judgement.

‘I’m a proud gay man,’ Andy said.

‘I have an intellectual disability.’

Andrew’s message is one of inclusion, diversity, and colour.

‘All people are different, but we fit together, like a rainbow,’ he said. ‘If some people are not nice about me being gay, that is not right.’

‘When (we) talk about it all together in the world, that makes it better.’

Nicole is Andy’s sister. She helped him access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) 12 years ago.

Andy asked Nicole to share what she had learned about his journey, his barriers, and his NDIS support.

‘The biggest way Andy’s disability impacts him is around communication. It can be tough for people to understand him, which is frustrating when he’s expressing his wants and needs,’ she said.

‘But he is really creative about using different methods to communicate, particularly technology like his smartphone.’

Andy’s sexual identity has presented additional barriers.

‘He has to work a lot harder to be part of the queer community because a lot of barriers still exist in this space around access and inclusion for people with disability,’ Nicole said.

‘That’s something I’d like to see improve because Andy really wants to meet a nice guy and be in a steady relationship.’

NDIS support has made a big difference to Andy’s wellbeing, and to the lives of people who love and support him.

Andy’s NDIS plan includes funding for home and living supports to help improve his confidence and independence.

That means he can live in his own home which is important to him.

'I live in a happy home. I love it. I do cooking and cleaning,' Andy said.

'Everything is my choice. My room is all pink and I like going out and making new friends. I do lots of good things every day,' he added.

Andy's plan also includes supports to build his capacity and improve his relationships.

'The NDIS has really changed Andy's life,' Nicole said.

Nicole remembers a time before the NDIS, and what that was like for Andy.

'Before the NDIS came along, there was nothing. There was no support for diverse sexualities,' she said. 'It was really just staying alive but not actually having a life.'

Andy and Nicole speak highly of Andy's provider.

'They have been really supportive and incredibly welcoming about Andy's sexuality and about his desire to participate in culturally appropriate activities,' Nicole said.

Life is good for Andy. He is in a drama club and he enjoys performing.

He's proud of who he is and proud to represent the LGBTIQA+ community.

'I like wearing my rainbow T-shirt, going out and having fun. Maybe I can find a boyfriend,' Andy added with a smile.

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