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Tahlia Blanshard’s hit the big time, representing Australia, playing for the ParaMatildas.

Blitzing the field the daring defender is scoring goals, thrilling fans and winning hearts.

It’s a dream the 24-year-old from Jilliby NSW never saw coming.

‘Before I started playing football I was swimming at an elite level. I even trialled for the Tokyo Paralympics but missed out by .01 of a second,’ Tahlia said.

‘While it was sad not to make the team, it meant other doors could open. I went and had some surgeries I’d been putting off then football came up and it changed my world.’

A talented allrounder with an unstoppable attitude, Tahlia says joining the NDIS in 2021 has been amazing and it has helped to build on every success.

‘I have Cerebral palsy and Erb’s palsy. I also have psychosocial disabilities and some chronic illnesses, so the NDIS has been a real life changer for me,’ Tahlia says.

Now funded for specialised arm splints to aid muscle weakness, ankle-foot orthosis (AFO’s) to help with mobility, occupational and physio therapies, exercise physiology, equipment and support workers, Tahlia says life is better than ever.

‘I say to a lot of people the NDIS has been one of the best things in my life,’ Tahlia adds.

‘I live on acreage and my parents were always worried about me because without them or my sister driving me there was no way for me to leave the house.’

‘Buses weren’t super accessible. I had a lot of anxiety over them, so I could only leave home if my mum, dad or sister were available.’

Now with regular support workers Tahlia can leave home independently when it suits.

‘Using my funding I’ve built a great team of support workers who can take me to appointments, to the shop and to training. It means I don’t have to rely on my parents or my sister anymore. My support is my world and it’s connected me,’ Tahlia says.

Working regularly with therapists Tahlia’s mobility and confidence continues to improve.

‘I’ve learnt how to balance, jump and use stairs, so I don’t have to be as nervous when I go out with my support workers thinking I’m going to fall over all the time,’ Tahlia said.

Even as a ParaMatilda Tahlia’s OT and physiotherapist have stepped up for extra support helping the defender overcome some necessary accessibility challenges to ensure safety.

‘The changeroom is full of people warming up. Bags are scattered all over the floor. It was a challenge for me to navigate, so I needed some help to learn how to do it,’ Tahlia said.

‘My OT and physio were great. They laid items out for me in the changeroom and helped me learn how to confidently weave between things and to step over them. That kind of support has just been amazing.

‘It means I can feel safer and more confident going into different environments and not worry I’m going to accidentally fall over or step on a friend,’ Tahlia laughed.

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