Posted on:
18 September 2024

Queenslander Mike is an NDIA planner and an NDIS participant too.

‘My independence means so much to me,’ he said. ‘I think the NDIS is terrific. It’s really helping a lot of people. It just makes life better.’

Mike started his full-time role 15 months ago in the National Call Centre (NCC).

A workplace desk assessment was done to ensure the workplace met his needs and he was given an ergonomic chair and an accessible car parking space in the office building.

‘It has been great working here. In the NCC I was able to help people understand a lot of the support and equipment out there and how it can help. I had several callers say to me, ‘You seem to know what you’re talking about with this equipment.’ I said, ‘I do. I use it.’

Mike has also had the opportunity to work as an access assessor and an eligibility reassessment officer. These roles have helped him to understand and build his knowledge around NDIS legislation and eligibility rules. Recently, he secured a role as a planner.

‘I’m really excited about my new planning role. I think I can really help participants with my lived experience of disability. Having had therapies and used equipment, I feel I’ve got a pretty good understanding about what people would benefit from,’ he said.

Mike is keen to continue to learn as much as he can and has been shadowing a colleague since he started in planning.

‘I’ve learned we look at plans holistically and I’ve learned how we set them out and come to each decision. But one day, I’d like to work in the Assistive Technology (AT) team.’

Mike has had his disability, arthrogryposis, since birth.

‘It’s a rare condition that affects my mobility,’ he said. ‘Basically, I don’t have any leg muscles, so I use crutches and a custom knee–ankle foot orthoses to walk short distances, and my scooter for longer distances.

‘I have hand controls fitted to my car and a crane attached to it to lift my scooter out.

‘I’ve also got a Firefly, a small electric motor I can attach to my manual wheelchair to power it. All this equipment has been life changing, so I have a real interest in AT too.’

At 18, Mike got his car licence, but he had difficulty using the foot pedals, so his dad and a mate custom designed and fitted his car with hand controls.

‘They based it off a motorcycle twist grip. It’s the handle that rotates and powers a motorbike engine. It was my first hand control. It was amazing,’ he said.

‘However we soon learned that using a regular motorcycle cable in a car might lead to it snapping, so we moved to stainless steel wire, and tinkered with that!

‘We were pioneers! There was nothing around back then. It’s what you did!’ Mike laughed.

Now 67 and older and wiser, Mike is grateful for his NDIS-funded car hand controls, and he can rest assured it’s all roadworthy and his car insurance covers it.

Mike said he’s also grateful his funding has helped make some necessary changes to his home – he now has an accessible bathroom and all the doorways in his home are wider.

‘My NDIS funding has helped me so much. While my plan isn’t huge, I’ve got everything I need to keep me independent,’ he said.

Related Stories and videos

Shepparton NDIS participant, Cherie Greville said she was close to giving up her career, but with NDIS funded equipment and supports she’s been able to continue working.

Speech to text program ensures Cherie continues her career

8 October 2021
Louise Sauvage reflects on journey for International Women’s Day

Champion Australian Paralympian says regardless of difference, we all have a part to play in society

6 March 2023
Brenton Bell has moved from aged care to his own home, built to his specific needs

Brenton’s grateful he can live his own life in his own place

11 April 2023
More stories and videos