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When Moree local, Richie, 49, joined the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in May 2024, all he wanted was to regain his independence and get support to help him rebuild his ‘new normal’ life after a stroke at 46 robbed him of his mobility and speech.

Once a self-employed fencer, touch footballer and active community member living on his own, Richie spent 18 months in hospital doing intensive therapies unable to leave.

Life soon got better when he joined the NDIS in May 2024. Richie was funded for transport, assistive technologies, home modifications and daily living supports.

He also used his funding to engage a local disability support service provider where a team of support workers supported Richie with the necessary paperwork to leave hospital.

The same team continue to support him at home with his “slow and steady” recovery.

Kylie and Jimmy, 2 of a team of staff who support Richie, have been key to his recovery.

‘We started supporting Richie in hospital,’ Kylie said. ‘He’d been there a while, we could see he was starting to decline.

‘Jimmy and I would go to the hospital and we’d say, "We’re going to bust you out for a couple of hours",’ Kylie laughed. ‘Then in January this year we made our final hospital bust out and busted him out full-time!’

Being able to return home was a major milestone for Richie, but before it could happen, Kylie had to work closely with an occupational therapist (OT) to assess his home.

‘Richie needed a ramp out the front of his house and some bathroom modifications to support his mobility before he was allowed to come home,’ Kylie said.

‘I said to the OT until the home modifications were done, our team could support Richie at home. We could also support him to use the accessible bathroom facilities at our hub. The OT agreed and signed Richie’s hospital discharge off. He was so excited. We were too!’

Since then, Richie’s support team have filled his days with activities to improve his recovery and helped him reconnect to his community.

Recently, Richie went grocery shopping for the first time in years – an important stepping stone to help rebuilding his independence.

‘One of my support workers takes me to watch junior footy too, and I get to do activities around town and in other nearby towns,’ he said.

‘I even got to watch mud bombing – an activity I did when I was younger!’ Richie added.

‘He loved it,’ Jimmy said. ‘Seeing all those hotted-up cars tackling tough terrain full of muddy obstacles – Richie was a bit like a kid in a lolly shop!’ Jimmy joked.

Ironically, Jimmy and Richie grew up together and were mates as kids.

‘Richie was always on the go, so at times I can see he does get a bit frustrated not being able to do what he used to, but we make sure we keep him busy,’ he said.

Now a wheelchair user with limited mobility on his right side, Richie continues to push himself.

‘I want to walk again and when we are out Jimmy will encourage me to stand and take a few steps,’ he said. ‘When he does, you want to see the smile on his face,’ Jimmy added.

Jimmy has also been taking videos of Richie since the team started working with him to help document his recovery. ‘Sometimes Richie forgets how far he’s come, so it’s a good way to remind him,’ he said.

As for the future, Richie’s long-term goals are to work on his speech and mobility, to one day drive again and return to work.

‘The NDIS has been amazing,’ he said. ‘I wouldn’t be where I am today without it, and Kylie, Jimmy, and the rest of the team. But I know I’ve still got a long way to go.’

Kylie said Richie’s journey has brought the team and the community closer together. Jimmy agreed.

‘Helping Richie has been a proud moment for all of us. It’s rewarding to be part of his recovery,’ Kylie said.
While Richie doesn’t have a partner and his 3 sons live way over in Perth, he said he’s “got a great team.”

‘I couldn’t be happier now I’m back home and fully supported,’ he said. ‘They’re a great mob to be with and like family to me.'

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