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At 31, NDIS participant Nicholas is busy making the most of life and enjoying growing independence.

With high physical support needs, including cerebral palsy, an intellectual disability and a visual impairment, the Taylors Lakes local – affectionately known as Nic – shares a purpose-built specialist disability accommodation (SDA) home with 2 close mates, Luke and Marty, who are also NDIS participants with cerebral palsy.

The trio moved into their new home in 2024 after years of planning, advocacy and collaboration. Together with their families, they created a space tailored not only to support their needs, but also to how they wanted to live – independently, socially and as part of their community.

For Nic’s mum Joan, the move has been life changing.

‘Now Nic is off living his own life and it’s beautiful to see,’ she said.

‘All of us – the boys and us parents – had a say in customising their home. We wanted to make sure it supported their complex physical needs while also giving them a true sense of home, independence and belonging.’

The process began long before construction started.

The families worked closely with the SDA provider, architects, builders and support providers throughout the entire design and build journey.

‘Before any land was purchased, the SDA provider consulted extensively with us all to ensure the location would meet our boys’ needs,’ Joan said.

‘We wanted them close to us, local amenities and their friends so they could maintain their community connections.’

Once the site was secured, the families helped shape important details of the home.

‘For example, Nic uses a wheelchair, so getting the window height and positioning right so he could see outside was really important,’ Joan said.

The 3 friends visited the construction site every Wednesday to watch their home take shape. Nic even had the house plans pinned to his bedroom wall while counting down to moving day.

Today, the result is a modern, accessible home designed around the needs of 3 young men.

Nic’s NDIS supports play a vital role in helping him live successfully and independently in SDA. Through Supported Independent Living (SIL), he has help with personal care, daily routines and community access, helping him build independence and confidence.

Joan said finding the right support providers made a huge difference.

‘Everyone who supports the boys respects this is Nic, Luke and Marty’s home first and foremost. It’s not treated like a workplace, which is lovely,’ she said.

Combining the right assistive technology with a strong support network has helped Nic stay mobile, safe and active, while continuing to expand his world.

Even though Nic is a man of few words, Joan said he loves connecting socially.

‘Recently, close friends celebrated a milestone wedding anniversary. While their children were making their speeches, Nic decided he wanted to make a speech too,’ Joan said.

‘When he did, it touched everybody in the room – anyone who knows Nic, loves him.’

Living with close friends has strengthened Nic’s independence and social connections in ways Joan said would not have been possible without NDIS supports.

‘The boys share a genuine friendship built on years of experiences together,’ she said.

‘Marty’s sister plays ice hockey, so they all go and watch her play. Nic now experiences activities he may never have explored living at home. What I love most is they all encourage each other to try new things.’

‘They are really close mates, which is so important. If you ask any of them who their best friends are, they say each other.’

For Joan, the move has also created new opportunities. After decades as Nic’s primary carer, she now has more time to focus on her own health and wellbeing. She can go out with friends without planning ahead and simply enjoy being Nic’s mum.

One of Joan’s proudest moments came when the house hosted a Mother’s Day high tea. Nic, Luke and Marty planned the menu, shopped with their support workers for gifts and chose the types of food they thought their mums would enjoy. They even helped prepare it.

‘We were told not to bring anything – just turn up and enjoy,’ Joan said.

‘I’ve never really felt like I’d had a traditional Mother’s Day before. This one was incredibly special and something I’ll smile about for the rest of my life.’

Joan said the greatest gift has been watching Nic enjoy a fulfilling young adult life filled with friendship, choice, routine and genuine connection.

‘I love it, here,’ Nic said. Joan added, ‘It feels like Nic has a much more typical young adult life now. It’s what every parent wants for their child.’

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