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For Canberra parents Kevin and Judy Lonsdale, their upcoming 50th wedding anniversary will mark much more than a celebration of the marriage.

Their daughter Cathy, who was born with Down syndrome, and their son, have arranged to send them on a holiday, while Cathy stays at home independently.

For the Lonsdale family, trips away were often stressful, but with the support of the NDIS, Cathy now has the help she needs to stay at home on her own.

“It’s our 50th wedding anniversary this week and Cathy has planned with her brother for us to go away for a few days,” Judy said.

“Without having someone on call, we wouldn’t feel so confident about leaving for two days.”

Five years ago when the NDIS started in the ACT, Cathy was able to secure funding for bathroom modifications – the start of her journey with the NDIS.

Two years later, Cathy received further home modification funding for a new wardrobe to reach her clothes more easily, and handrails down the front steps so Cathy can collect the mail – her favourite daily chore.

Cathy also receives funding for support workers who take her to weekly bible studies class, and to the shops to buy the weekly Big League rugby league magazine.

“Rather than us having to take Cath, it gives her the opportunity to go with other people, talk with them, socialise and that’s a pretty important part of life,” Cathy’s father Kevin said.

“We’ve noticed Cath’s confidence has increased, she’s got new things to talk about when she comes home.”

Cathy has volunteered to make a speech at the family anniversary celebration, and it’s these small changes he says he notices every day.

“Little subtleties come out every now and then, these little things happen over time.

“It’s helped improve the family dynamic, she has a greater level of independence.”

Kevin says having additional financial support has meant Cathy will always have access to the support she needs.

“There are certain things that Cathy may have already been doing before the NDIS, but now we are able to receive funding for it.

“It now means we don’t have to sacrifice things, or prioritise, we don’t have to skimp on things.”

Next on the agenda for Cathy – planning her 50th birthday party in a few years’ time.

“She’s desperate to be 50 because she’s planning a big celebration!” Judy said.

Thursday 21 March marks World Down Syndrome Day, celebrating the lives and achievements of people with Down syndrome, creating a global voice, advocating for the rights, inclusion and wellbeing of people with Down syndrome.

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