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[Transcript for 'Brad joins his mates for the ANZAC parade'](#)

The Australian Navy mission, to fight and win, became a personal mantra for former Navy Sailor of 20 years, Brad Rees. The only difference, Brad's battle was taking place in his body instead of at sea.

Life took a very different course of action for the 58-year-old former stoker from Toowoomba after he suffered a major heart attack in October 2012 that left him with an acquired brain injury.

Despite the effects of Brad's brain injury on his cognitive state, his long-term memory remains intact and he's become particularly fond of celebrating his prior naval service on ANZAC Day.

Last year, with the help of his NDIS-funded support worker and the local RSL, Brad was able to participate in the local ANZAC Day parade, which he intends to do again this year.

"Funnily enough, when Brad was in the Navy, he was never really interested in ANZAC Day," Brad's sister, Candy Dixon said.

"But it's become very important to him and he refers to it now as 'his day'. He loves it."

It was at the home of a close Navy mate in Brisbane that Brad suffered the fateful heart attack six and a half years ago.

Brad wasn't expected to live, but his fighting spirit was strong. After making it to hospital alive, thanks to life-saving CPR, he was placed on life support.

After three days, the doctors told Brad's family there seemed to be no brain activity and prepared them for the worst as they turned the machines off.

"They took him off the life support and he rallied, he came good," Candy said.

While no one could be sure how much function Brad would regain, his family were hopeful after he made significant gains in the first six months.

"One day on my way into the hospital to visit Brad, the nurse rang me and said, 'Brad's sitting up, he's just spoken.' We couldn't believe it.

"Not long after that, I'd just left the hospital after visiting Brad and I got a phone call saying he was really unsettled and could I come back. When I got there, he was standing in the middle of the room! He's always been somebody who proved people wrong."

After lengthy hospital stays, Candy's husband Kevin took early retirement at the age of 63 and became Brad's full-time carer. Brad then moved in to their family home in Toowoomba.

However after 12 months, it became apparent that Brad needed his own space. Candy found him alternative accommodation around the corner from where she lived.

"It was absolutely lovely, but unless we came and took Brad out, he would spend his days just sitting there.

Brad joined the NDIS in July 2017 when it rolled out in Toowoomba. He receives support for social, community and civic participation and has funding for accommodation and supports to help build his independence.

"We've been able to choose a provider that's a good fit for Brad, so I know they answer all his needs and they look after him and that's a confidence I have in them.

"Brad is a Broncos tragic, he's always been Broncos crazy. I told his support worker and they organised a trip to a Broncos home game with a couple of other people. He had a lovely time. Kevin and I couldn't have done that, it's a lot of work."

"The NDIS has given us a confidence that he is well looked after. We can move on with our lives and know that he is happy.

"We realised we're all ageing and that there would come a time when we couldn't do as much as we wanted to with him. It's the reassurance that the NDIS will always be there for him."

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