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2 September 2019

[Transcript for 'A night out with Gig Buddies'](#)

A NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity building (ILC) grant, awarded to disability services provider Gig Buddies, who pair volunteers up with people with disability so they can attend gigs, means it can now extend its services.

The NDIA provide ILC grants to organisations so they can carry out inclusive community activities. This creates connections between people with disability and their communities, and in this instance, Gig Buddies is a perfect example.

Gig Buddies and ACL Disability Services CEO, Carol Smail, said the NDIS ILC grant has made a massive difference to Gig Buddies – an ACL initiative, designed to support people with disability to see bands, go to sporting events, theatre and other social activities.

“Taking a person to a gig or an event seems such a small thing but it has actually completely changed some people’s lives,” Carol said. “It has given them the confidence to go out in a social setting and be with people they would never normally get to meet.”

“As we know a lot of people with disabilities lead quite closed lives – it’s their family, it’s their support network, people who are paid to be in their lives, people they are related to. It often doesn’t go beyond that,” Carol said.

“Gig Buddies opens up a whole new social network for them. They become friends with their volunteer, then their volunteer’s friends. It even extends to their volunteer’s family. It starts a chain reaction. It’s how it works for us as well, which is priceless,” Carol added.

To Gig Buddies the ILC grant now means it can extend its service beyond Sydney.

“It’s been the biggest grant we ever had and it’s just been wonderful,” Carol said.

“Initially we were only operating in the Sydney metro but now the ILC grant has allowed us to set up other hubs throughout Sydney’s Northern Beaches, extending our reach.

“We are also about to work with the Inner West Council to set up another hub there, which is really exciting too.”

The whole Gig Buddies concept came about when Carol, as ACL Disability Services CEO, attended a British Institute of Learning Disabilities Conference in the UK a few years back.

“A group from Brighton from the charity, Stay Up Late (in the UK) ran the program to enable people with disabilities to go out to gigs at night with volunteers with similar interests, who would normally go to these gigs anyway,” she said.

“I got talking to staff and I ended up spending a week with the team in Brighton.

“Then Paul Richards, who founded Gig Buddies UK, said to me as I left, why don’t you set up a Gig Buddies project in Australia.

“As I flew home to Sydney I thought this could work. I thought Gig Buddies could be something we could do on the side on a Friday afternoon after had we finished all our other work but with the ILC grant, Gig Buddies has just boomed. Now, time wise it’s almost on par with ACL, our disability organisation!” she said.

Carol attributes Gig Buddies success to it being unique.

“We could write 100 stories about ACL, which has been going for over 50 years. We have group homes, drop-in support, shopping, banking, cooking – all supports many other organisations provide but I think Gig Buddies has been our real point of difference. We are offering a service nobody else is doing,” she said.

For more information on including Gig Buddies in your NDIS plan, or to become a Gig Buddies volunteer, visit www.gigbuddiessydney.org or call (02) 9419 6951.

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