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There is no doubt Caboolture resident Stephanie Dennison loves her parents but now, as a 29-year-old, she couldn’t be happier living her own independent life, in a share house with three other housemates who are all around her own age.

According to mum Diane, Steph, who has an intellectual disability with limited speech, just loves her newfound freedom as an NDIS participant, living in Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) with Supported Independent Living (SIL) funding, which allows her to lead her own life – one she chooses.

“Every day she has something on,” Diane said. “She does cooking classes on Mondays and she goes swimming Tuesdays.

“On Wednesdays, Steph goes to what they call Mad Wednesday. It’s at the local sporting club. They have a DJ and they can all have a dance.

“There’s also raffles there and often Steph, or one of her housemates, wins a meat tray so their freezer is full. She’s got a more active life than me,” Diane said with a laugh.

“Afford, Steph’s disability provider, operate the house. They have done a fantastic job setting it up and ensuring it has good dynamics.

“Steph lives there with another woman and two men and they are all around the same age. They all get along and treat one other like family. Steph, being a nurturer, vibrant and switched on too, makes sure she looks out for them. It’s beautiful.”

> Steph and her mum stand next to a bus that features a giant picture of a happy Steph singing

Diane said Afford has also assigned a mini bus to the house so staff can take them all out together to do joint activities.

“Recently we dropped in to visit Steph but she soon turned us away! They had plans to all go fishing at the beach, and eat fish and chips. We couldn’t believe it,” Diane said with a laugh.

Never accessing disability supports before, Steph joined the NDIS, in October 2018, and within four months, she achieved her goal, to move out of the family home and lead her own life.

“I knew if we were going to apply for NDIS funding it had to be right for her, and for us, so I made it my priority to learn as much as I could about the Scheme and attend as many information sessions as I could.

“I soon realised it wasn’t up to any provider or the NDIS to find a suitable home for Steph, it was up to us so I started researching specialist disability accommodation.

“That’s when I came across Afford, who had just finished building a house. It was move-in-ready and they were looking for expressions of interest.”

Knowledgeable and fully equipped with all the information she needed to get Steph NDIS SDA and SIL funding, Diane said her initial NDIS eligibility meeting, which she was able to do conveniently over the phone, went well.

“Because we had a clear picture of the path we wanted to achieve for Steph and I had done my research, and I had all the information they needed our initial interview went well.

“Then we were transferred to another team and the process began,” Diane said.

“Afford and the NDIS were great. They worked with us all the way to make sure everything was right for Steph, and us, and within four month’s she was able to move in.

“Afford had furnished the house. All we had to do was furnish Steph’s bedroom. We took her to IKEA and we brought everything new, as you do when you move into a new pad.

“The place is just fabulous,” Diane said. “Steph is happy and settled so now she can concentrate on leading her own life and we can start to concentrate on ours.”

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