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Spending years online and over the phone, searching for accessible holiday accommodation, power wheelchair user Leanne Watson discovered Accessible Accommodation (AA), a website she said “actually ticked all the boxes”.

The Drysdale NDIS participant said she had such great experience with her family, holidaying at one of AA’s property listings, she let the company know then, lo and behold, she was offered a job.

“Initially, I started doing bookwork for AA five hours a week, then owner, Kerry Williams said with my lived experience, and having stayed in its properties, would I like to assist with customer enquiries. Excited, I accepted and it’s been great,” she said.

Leanne, 55, said at age 42, she was diagnosed with Limb-girdle muscular dystrophy – a progressive muscle disease, severely affecting mobility in her arms and legs.

“It’s certainly been a huge change for me. Now, I can’t even lift a cup to have a sip. I need it beside me with a straw in it, and I have to lean over to take a sip,” she said.

As far as work goes, Leanne gets support to swap out of her power wheelchair, over to her manual wheelchair, so she can comfortably perform her role at her home desk.

“I use a virtual keyboard, and we’re sorting out a voice to text program,” she said.

“A few years back, I used to do book work for a company where I had to climb up 20 stairs.

In the end I just couldn’t do it so I had to resign, so it’s fantastic to be back working again.”

Leanne said it’s odd, in this day and age, there are still misconceptions about accessibility.

“I’ve found everyone has a different idea about what accessibility is,” she said.

“There’s been so many times I’ve called ahead and asked if the premises is accessible and they’ve said yes, but when we’ve arrived it’s not.”

Leanne said she’s so thankful her new employer gets accessibility and how to do it right.

“In the past, I spent countless hours on the phone and online, having very little luck, and at times it has been frustrating and exhausting because some people’s ideas of what is accessible often had us disappointed on arrival, and it compromised our family on having a fully inclusive holiday because I was then limited in what I could do,” she said.

“Thankfully, AA get it. Kerry, started the business after experiencing the same challenges as me, trying to find accessible holiday accommodation for her elderly mum so she could make

the most of their time together."

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