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Wickham NDIS participant, 21-year-old Zac Lloyd has moved out of home to start leading his own independent life and says he couldn't be happier.

Zac, a wheelchair user with spastic diplegia, a form of cerebral palsy, said when he discovered these disability friendly apartments, which could meet all his independent living needs, he couldn't believe his luck.

"It's been a goal of mine to move out of home into my own place since I was 18. Now, I can't believe I've lived here a month, and I'm not even home sick!" he said laughing.

Zac's apartment is located in Wickham, in the West End precinct.

"It's a great spot. When I go out my door I've got shops, cafes, restaurants, live music venues, gyms and the Newcastle Interchange, where I can catch public transport," he said.

"My apartment has a large open living area, home automation, automatic doors, accessible appliances and wider doorways, where I can easily get around in my wheelchair without worrying about knocking walls.

"I've also got a lovely kitchen with clever accessible features; an accessible bathroom with rails, a laundry, and my own private balcony where I can sit, relax and enjoy the view."

"Insitu had a stall at the [NEST] event. Initially, mum and I spoke to its chief housing officer, Rosie Trantham. She was great, informing us about the process, then she sent us over to speak to Bobby and Karen from Aruma.

"Rosie, Bobby and Karen were all really helpful. They said they felt I would meet the necessary Supported Disability Accommodation (SDA) eligibility criteria.

"They helped me fill out all the paper work, and all my other support staff – the Singleton and Newcastle Challenge teams, Detour Youth Services, Maitland and Newcastle CPA teams, Action OT, Strong Ties and the NDIS, who all helped me to make a smooth transition to my new home, which I'm really thankful for and I'd be lost without," Zac said.

"Initially, I was a little worried about my personal support, having someone other than my parents do it, but my support workers have all been great. They do a fantastic job of caring for me in general, and they've made me feel much more confident."

Zac said through his NDIS plan he's receiving support seven days a week.

“I have a two-hour morning service to assist with lunch, then I have an evening service to help me prepare dinner,” he said.

“Through my NDIS funding, I also receive regular physio and occupational therapies; I have a forearm walker and a standing frame I use to help build my leg strength, and I have a power wheelchair when I need to go on long trips or want to chat to people at eye-level.

“I do prefer to use my manual wheelchair around home, and when COVID restrictions ease I’m going to use it to continue my boxing training. It’s great for my fitness and when I wheel myself around the block I can get my heart rate up.”

Zac said while he can do all his transfers himself, his ultimate goal is to get his Drivers licence and to one day walk, and with the regular supports he is now receiving, and refreshingly optimistic and determined, he’s confident he can beat the odds.

“Mum and I did make a video of me walking. I said to her I wanted to try and walk without my walker while she supported me. My legs were going all over the place, but I made 11 steps in 10 years, which is a good effort for me, but I’m going to do more,” he said.

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