Daynah’s drive to make cricket more inclusive through employment

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Daynah Hopkins, 26, is a NDIS participant living in Melbourne.

He has an intellectual disability and autism and like so many young Australians, he is a huge lover of sports.

Daynah plays cricket, AFL and basketball – but his favourite out of them all is cricket.

“I play for the Victorian Vikings, Victoria’s cricket team for players who have intellectual disability. I’ve also played two national-championship winning sides, and I’ve represented Australia twice,” Daynah said.

While he has a natural talent for sport, Daynah often reflects on where he would be if it weren’t for the NDIS.

Before joining the NDIS in 2017, Daynah didn’t have any formal disability supports in place.

“The NDIS has really helped me become independent, and they have helped me continue with my sport and I’m very thankful for that,” Daynah said.

“Before the NDIS, life was a bit of a struggle. When it comes to my sport I can understand things just fine, but put I found it hard learning how to do every day things that came so easy for other people. It was frustrating.”

Now, Daynah uses his NDIS plan to have a support worker help him with day to day tasks like cooking, funding for transport and supports to build Daynah’s skills so he can work.

“The NDIS has helped me out a lot with my personal development. I’m still learning how to cook, but since the NDIS supported me I know how to make steak and chicken schnitzel now.”

Daynah’s independence has been growing, and his confidence to take on new challenges extend beyond the cricket ground.

Two days a week, Daynah attends Jigsaw, an NDIS provider who offer a pathway for people with disability to train and transition into mainstream employment.

“The first thing I learned going to Jigsaw was how to be punctual very quickly,” laughs Daynah.

“I’ve learned so much at Jigsaw and the people who work there are so nice. It’s also around the corner from where I grew up in Melbourne so it gives me a sense of home too.

“The latest work experience I did was computer work doing quality control and file management. It’s quite rewarding, I felt really good about myself at the end of the day and my trainers were really

happy with my work.”

Daynah hopes what he learns at Jigsaw will help him land his dream job of working in recruitment for Cricket Victoria or Cricket Australia.

He’s also one of many young Australians whose dream career comes from a hobby they love, but for Daynah, the reason why is a little closer to his heart.

“I have a passion for recruiting the next generation of cricketers with disability because I’ve been in that environment as a player. I really think it would be a perfect way to give back to the sport that’s given me so much.”

As a young person with disability Daynah hopes one day sports like cricket are accessible for everyone.

“It’s great to see all these young players with disability coming through but I still think we can make sport and society more inclusive and accessible.

“From my experience, I’ve learned that more people need to give people with disability a chance. They should focus on their ability and not on their disability.”

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