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When Kevin Davison’s mother died, his father Greg not only had to cope with his own grief of losing his wife of nearly 50 years, but he also had to find a new way to care for his adult son.

Kevin, 47, lives with a significant intellectual disability and needs 24-hour care.

His mum Sally – a well-known elder and artist in her Indigenous community outside Alice Springs – passed away of cancer just before her 50th wedding anniversary late last year.

Her death left a community in mourning, and her widower Greg caring for their son alone.

Distraught, both Greg and Kevin struggled to cope, physically and emotionally.

But a decision to move to the Whitsundays in Queensland not only reconnected Greg with his hometown community, it also led the family to the NDIS and life-changing supports.

Soon after Kevin joined the Scheme, his life – and Greg’s role as carer – began to change.

Greg says accessing support, with the help of NDIA Partner in the Community (PITC) Feros Care, provided Kevin with immediate benefits, which also helped Greg manage his son’s care during a traumatic time.

“Kevin’s doing really well,” Greg said “Now, he goes to the physio once a fortnight which has strengthened his movements.

“He is also able to attend regular speech therapy sessions to help improve his communication skills. I don’t think he’s ever going to be really fluent, but he certainly has improved.”

Greg says prior to receiving NDIS support, Kevin had only “an existence”.

“But now he has a life,” Greg said. “His general demeanour has improved out of sight.”

Greg says NDIS support has helped Kevin to improve his social and communication skills and increase his independence.

These days, Kevin wakes up early before sunrise and, rather than keeping to himself, often begins a conversation with his dad.

“For the first time in his life, he is coming out and saying, ‘Good morning, how are you?’, which is really, really good,” Greg said.
“And now, when he leaves the house, he’s saying ‘bye’ or ‘see you later’."

Feros Care Local Area Coordinator (LAC) Stacey Atkinson began working with Kevin and Greg while Sally was receiving palliative care. She helped Kevin to access NDIS-supported activities, which meant Greg could care for his wife.

“Kevin was able to spend a few days at home, a few days staying with his aunty, and a few days at respite with RADS Whitsunday, an NDIS provider,” she said.

Stacey says NDIS supports have been critical in supporting Kevin and Greg to find a new path in life together.

Kevin has been able to access a range of confidence-building social activities and spend time with people his own age. It has helped him to form new relationships and become more independent.

“He’s really come out of his shell, and now he knows what’s happening, he knows his routine and he’s happy to leave his dad and go and do things,” Stacey said.

“They do group-based activities and he’s gone sailing, fishing and camping without his dad.

“He has built up a really good rapport with that service provider. They are people he is around day-to-day, and he has developed his own unique way of communicating with them.”

Kevin now accesses daily respite programs, which are supporting him to continue his capacity-building life skills, including learning to cook for himself.

He is developing his social skills through a range of activities, including arts, crafts, woodwork, gardening, cooking, and enjoys going to the beach, park, and shopping malls.

With the right supports, he and his dad Greg are navigating a new life, south of Proserpine.

“Recently Kevin has been showing me things, and he’s been saying, ‘Oh, mum gave me that,’” Greg said. “I think he’s come to terms with it (Sally’s passing).”

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