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Making the Special Olympics swimming squad is a dream come true for Oliver, who recently told his mother he was racing for his late stepfather Wayne.

Oliver, who lives with Down syndrome, uses his National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) supports to help him train at least 4 times a week.

“While training, Oliver once said, ‘Mum, I want to go to the Special Olympics’, but I didn’t ever dream that he would be able to participate in these Games,” Oliver’s mum, Valerie said.

“He’s been to a training camp on the Gold Coast and attended all the swimming meets and has improved so much. When he swam in Brisbane recently, he had 3 races and got 3 personal bests.”

Oliver, 38, is part of the Special Olympics Queensland squad and will compete at the 2022 Special Olympics Australia National Games in Launceston, Tasmania.

Valerie will be poolside to watch Oliver achieve his dream, and Oliver’s father Ian, who helps transport his son to swimming training and other activities, is also travelling to watch his son compete.

An all-rounder when it comes to fitness, Oliver previously took part in the Noosa Triathlon and currently practises Tai Chi and aqua aerobics.

“Oliver has always wanted to be fit and when he attends aqua aerobics, he sings all the songs and is a very special and loved member of the group,” Valerie said.

“Swimming is also very good for Oliver because he has low muscle tone, in fact that’s how he got started with the sport, after the physiotherapist suggested it.

“I’m so grateful he has NDIS access as it means support workers take him to swimming training which saves me a lot of time. Having all of these people on board makes life so much easier.”

Valerie says gaining access to the NDIS, through Local Area Coordination support from Carer’s Queensland, had made a huge difference in Oliver’s life.

He now participates in a variety of activities every day, gets involved in his local community and is slowly starting to become more independent.

Support workers help Oliver with meal preparation, take him to drama classes and help him tend to daily tasks. He lives in a self-contained unit attached to his mother’s house but spends the evenings and mornings with Valerie.

Oliver also accesses NDIS supports so he can attend a local Men's Shed, socialise with friends, and indulge in his love of the performing arts.

Recently joining a drama group through Black Box Theatre in Nambour, Valerie said Oliver says to his mother, he "was born to be a star".

Valerie said knowing Oliver has help makes her feel more supported in her role as a full-time carer, particularly now she's on her own following the passing of her husband, Wayne.

Oliver and Wayne shared a special bond, and it'll be those memories spurring Oliver on when he takes to the blocks in Launceston.

"Wayne used to do lots of things with Oliver and was so good with him and it's been quite difficult to cope emotionally, but Oliver and I have each other which is lovely," Valerie said.

"When he swims he often says, 'I did that race for Wayne' which breaks my heart, but is also so lovely at the same time."

The Games, for athletes with an intellectual disability, begin on Monday. Featuring 10 sports, Oliver will be one of nearly 1000 athletes taking part in the Games across 5 days of action.

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