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Thanks to a Geelong-based Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) developer and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Brenton Bell has moved from aged care to his own home, built to his specific needs.

Now 60, Brenton became a paraplegic 3 years ago and joined the NDIS for support.

“Every day I think how lucky I am and how grateful I am for all the supports I get,” he said.

Now calling Grovedale home, Brenton lives close to amenities in a spacious 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom home he co-designed with SDA developer, Keith Fagg.

Brenton’s home is just like any other property. However, inside it boasts state-of the art assistive technology.

Also, if Brenton needs to discuss anything relating to his home and supports, he calls his SDA provider Illowra Living who ensure his environment continues to meet his needs.

“I’ve got everything I need to live independently,” he said. “It’s been that good I do most things myself.

“I did have 24/7 NDIS support, but I found I don’t need it, so I reduced it. Now I can manage on my own from 3 to 8pm every day.

“It is hard having people in and out your home constantly, but now during that time I get to do what I want to do. I cook dinner on the BBQ, turn up the music and enjoy my own space,” he said.

Built and accredited to NDIS High Physical Support standards, Brenton says he still in disbelief how easy it is for him to move around his new home.

“The doorways are wider; the floors are level; my oven and microwave are easy to access and with my hydraulic wheelchair there’s no difficulty accessing any kitchen cupboards,” he said.

“I’ve also got ceiling hoists and a hospital bed with an air mattress to prevent bed sores. After having a couple, I wouldn’t be without it.”

Brenton’s home also features an uninterrupted power supply (UPS system) – a battery back-up so if his power goes off, all his equipment and utilities still work.

Blinds are automated and floors are vinyl plank which means his wheelchair won’t slip.

Brenton’s accessible bathroom is the size of a bedroom. He can easily position himself under the sink to shave or brush his teeth and transfer himself to his shower and toilet.

“What I like about this SDA design is the carers have their own room and bathroom and I have mine. We don’t have to share,” he said.

With his increased independence, Brenton has also turned his garage into a workshop.

Now able to tinker with tools, he’s made a timber planter wall which he has fitted to his back patio fence, and he’s been filling it with plants from his local Bunnings store.

“I really love my outdoor area,” Brenton said. “I often cook a steak on the BBQ for dinner. I’m also looking forward to getting a dining table and some chairs out here.

“Eventually I’d like to put a roof on the pergola and lay artificial turf over the concrete.”

Jodie, Brenton’s Access Your Supports NDIS support coordinator, and Keith said they marvel at how Brenton’s move has improved his overall health and general wellbeing.

“This home has been the best thing for Brenton. Now his health is more stable, he’s been able to achieve his goal – to reduce his supports,” Jodie said.

“Ash, Brenton’s house manager, has helped to make this happen too. She was onboard at the start. She worked with Brenton, listening, and acting on what he wanted.”

A huge SDA advocate, who was inspired by former NDIA CEO David Bowen in the early days of the Scheme, Keith said it’s fantastic to see Brenton happy, settled and in control of his own life in a home they co-designed so he could live his best life. Keith also works with Illowra Living as the SDA Provider for his SDA homes.

“That’s what it’s all about,” Keith said. “Everybody’s situation is unique. If all parties can work together to understand where the participant is coming from, and we can get the design right, look what we can achieve!”

The NDIS is now providing support to more than 534,000 Australians, with more than half receiving supports for the first time.

Brenton is one of over 151,000 Victorians benefitting from the NDIS.

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