Sam’s independence is growing, and he’s broadcasting a future in radio

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Sam Valavanis is working toward his chosen career in radio and he’s excited about the future.

‘I’d love to be a presenter on a prime-time program for one of the major commercial stations,’ Sam says.

He recently completed an Audio Ability radio broadcasting course with the Community Media Training Organisation.

The course aims to build the media skills, knowledge, and confidence of people who live with disability.

Sam learned broadcasting skills and gained work experience in a radio station, supported by a mentor with industry experience.

The medium of radio is ideal for Sam, a skilled listener and a natural communicator.

‘A lot of people I’ve spoken to have said they see me as someone in radio,’ Sam says.

Sam is blind, having had both eyes surgically removed in early childhood due to a rare eye cancer.

‘I remember being able to see things like colours, vehicles, and shapes,’ Sam says.

Now, Sam is a cancer free 21-year-old, living in the suburb of Berwick with his family, and learning how to find his way around Melbourne.

His capacity to pursue his career goals are made possible with support from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Sam’s NDIS plan focusses on his orientation and mobility. This builds Sam’s capacity and confidence to leave home and travel by himself.

‘I love public transport. So I’ve been learning how to use trains, trams and buses independently,’ Sam says.

‘I have also learned to use apps that help me get around, and how to ask people for help if I need it. And I’m looking to learn how to use taxis and Ubers on my own.’

The ability to travel by himself has seen a dramatic improvement in Sam’s independence.

‘It’s going really well. I'm very confident now to travel on my own,’ Sam says.

‘Only 2 or 3 years ago I wouldn't have been so confident to get on public transport.

‘But now, thanks to the orientation and mobility instructor, I can travel independently and go to the city.

‘My parents would never have imagined me doing that before, but now I do it by myself.’

Sam’s NDIS funded occupational therapy assessed his needs and identified the assistive technologies that would help.

Then they taught Sam how to use those devices, which are also funded through his NDIS plan.

‘I use a braille tablet to get on the internet, create Word documents and send emails, and communicate online in the same way other people would when they use a smart phone or computer,’ Sam says.

‘I also use a navigation device with GPS to help me when I’m travelling.’

Sam’s confidence and independence are growing daily.

He is focused and excited about his career and reflects on how he got to this point in his life.

‘The NDIS has definitely made a huge difference in my life,’ Sam says.

‘I don’t know where I would be today without it, the assistive pathways it has provided, and the people that have come into my life because of it.’

N.B. The NDIS is now providing support to more than 592,000 Australians.

Sam is one of more than 158,000 participants in Victoria benefitting from the NDIS.

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