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Thursday Island Torres Strait Islander Charlie Kris lights up when he talks about all the equipment he has to improve his home, school and community access.

Living remotely with most buildings built high up on stilts, the 14-year-old wheelchair user, who has spina bifida, found it hard to get into parts of his home, school and community.

Using his NDIS funding, Charlie engaged local disability provider, My Pathway.

Now he has all the equipment and support he needs to access his home, school and community and the bubbly teenager couldn’t be happier.

‘One of the best things I have is a lift. It was installed at the end of our veranda. It’s been great. It’s made it a lot easier and safer for me to move around at home,’ he said.
Charlie’s school have done its part, building an accessible lift on its new library and an accessible toilet.

‘It’s so cool. Now I can access everything,’ he said beaming.

Laura, Charlie’s main support worker said she can see Charlie is now much more confident and he’s enjoying friendships with peers and other community members.

‘Through his supports Charlie is able to sustain these friendships and actively engage in community events and activities,’ she said.

‘All the support and equipment he’s received is also having a positive effect on the community. It’s shown people how simple access and inclusion really is.

‘Through his equipment and support Charlie is helping to educate the community about how they can do things better and he’s showing people how the NDIS has is helping him.

In fact Charlie is a bit of a celebrity around town now. Everyone knows him,’ Laura added.

Now a regular face at the My Pathway Disability Support Hub and with support workers encouraging him and building his confidence, Charlie gets to do all sorts of social, capacity building and cultural activities.

‘With support, Charlie is more involved in community events, like football games, dance practice, discos, and cultural events. He loves to watch and then join in,’ Laura said.

‘He’s had a few proud moments. A few years ago he led the State of Origin march. He was so happy. It was beautiful to see.

‘We are also teaching Charlie to cook and how to make healthier food choices. Now he’s choosing grapes, nuts and water over soft drinks and potato chips. He’s doing really well.’

Charlie said he’s also started boxing to help build his strength and fitness.

‘I like to be at boxing early,’ he said. ‘The little kids class starts at 4:30pm, so me and my friends help them to put their gloves on and we help them train a bit,’ he said.

‘I like helping them out. My class starts class after, so now the little kids are helping us!’

Asked what his favourite sport is and Charlie yells, ‘Fishing’.

‘I catch a lot of fish – big queenies, trevally, shark, groper, white fish. I love to spear garfish at night,’ he said.

‘A lot of us fish down at the wharf. If we don’t take it home we gut it, filet it and cook it there.’

Charlie has also started a little microenterprise business.

He’s making and selling Thothas – sharp metal spikes local hunters fasten to the end of their bamboo wharp to spear fish.

‘I get 4 pieces of metal, bunch them all together, tie them with string and sharpen the ends. ‘Then they go into the end of what we call a wharp. It’s made out of thick wood,’ he said.

‘I tie the bamboo stick into the middle of it, so when you use it to hunt, and you throw it into the water to spear a fish it will float.’

Charlie said he makes them with his support workers Maine and Walter.

‘I sell them to the men who are too lazy to make them. They buy them quick,’ he laughed.

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