

Andrew's vision is for communities to come together like a rainbow

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Andrew Bryson, from Penrith, brings joy to those around him.

In turn, they support him to live a good life, surrounded by love and free from judgement.

'I'm a proud gay man,' Andrew says.

'I have an intellectual disability.'

Andrew's message on IDAHOBIT Day is one of inclusion, diversity, and beautiful colour.

'All the people are different but we fit together, like a rainbow,' Andrew says.

'I like this day, it is a good one. If some people are not nice about I am gay, that is not right.'

'When (we) talk about it all together in the world, that makes it better.'

Nicole is Andrew's loving sister. She helped Andrew access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) 10 years ago.

Andrew asked Nicole to share what she has learned about his journey, his barriers, and his NDIS support.

'The biggest way Andy's disability impacts him is around communication. It can be tough for people to understand him, which is frustrating when Andy is expressing his wants and needs,' Nicole says.

'But he is really creative about using different methods to communicate, particularly technology like his smartphone.'

Andy's sexual identity has presented additional barriers.

'He has to work a lot harder to be part of the queer community because a lot of barriers still exist in this space around access and inclusion for people with disability,' Nicole says.

'That's something I'd like to see improve because Andrew really wants to meet a nice guy and be in a steady relationship.'

NDIS support has made a big difference to Andrew's wellbeing, and to the lives of people who love and support him.

Andrew's NDIS plan includes funding for home and living supports, greatly helping his independence.

That means he can live in his own home which is important to him.

'I live in Dolphin Cove, a happy home. I love it. I do cooking and cleaning,' Andrew says.

'Everything is my choice. My room is all pink. And I go out and make new friends. Lots of good things everyday.'

His plan also includes supports to access the community, build capacity, and improve relationships.

'The NDIS has really changed Andrew's life,' Nicole says.

Nicole remembers a time before the NDIS, and what that was like for Andrew.

'Before the NDIS came along, there was nothing. There was no support for diverse sexualities,' Nicole says.

'It was really just staying alive but not actually having a life.'

Andrew's support services are supplied by registered NDIS provider the Australian Foundation for Disability (Afford).

'Afford have been really supportive and incredibly welcoming about Andrew's sexuality and about his desire to participate in culturally appropriate activities,' Nicole says.

Life is good for Andrew. He is in a drama club and getting ready for a performance.

'We will have a big show soon for people to clap. I am going to be a cat and a bear,' Andrew says.

For IDAHOBIT Day Andrew is planning to get out, represent his community, and see what the day brings.

'I'll wear my rainbow shirt and go out, having fun. Maybe I can find a boyfriend,' Andrew says.

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