

Posted on:

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Alecia can't believe she's working for the NDIA – a government agency she has found 'supportive and flexible'.

'A year ago, I had no idea I was going to be employed in a workplace where I could actually work full-time and have the support and flexibility I needed,' she said.

'It's been fantastic. I mainly work from home, and I have my manager's full backing!'

At work, Alecia can speak openly about her autism and the ways she works best.

'I prefer written instructions over verbal, so just simple changes like that can really help, and for me, being able to work like this in a respectful and inclusive environment has been life changing – that's putting it lightly,' she said.

The 32-year-old Victorian, from Officer, now has a whole new outlook on life.

She is part of a much more inclusive Australian society that recognises autism, the impacts it has on a person's day-to-day life and that is exploring ways to address any challenges sooner.

Alecia said sadly for her, it did take a long time to get diagnosed.

'I was 28 when I got my official diagnosis,' she said. 'When I was growing up, Mum thought I had autism, but I didn't present like others who had it, so when it came to trying to get me diagnosed, Mum felt no one really listened to her.'

Going undiagnosed had a significant impact on how Alecia was treated growing up.

She developed mental health-related challenges, one being agoraphobia, which meant she rarely left home for over 8 years.

'In my early adulthood, I was put on the disability pension. Basically, a lot of people thought I would never get a job or anything like that,' Alecia said.

'I felt hopeless and alone, except for family support, especially from my mum.

'We knew I had potential, but I just felt like I lived in a world where nobody was going to give me a chance to prove myself.

'I wanted to do something, so I enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Science (Criminology) degree and finished it online in April 2024.'

While studying, Alecia heard about the Australian Disability Network's 'Stepping Into Internship' program. It supports university students and new graduates with disability to do paid work experience with host employers.

Accepted into the program, Alecia joined the NDIA's Compensation Branch and worked as an intern from January to March 2024.

'I developed a real love for the Agency,' she said. 'I found it was so supportive, so I applied for an APS3 role with the Access team, and got it.'

'A few months later, I secured an APS5 policy officer role back in Compensation.'

Alecia said work has 'really empowered' her, and for that she is forever grateful.

'I know I couldn't work in a job where I didn't have the flexibility and understanding I have here, and I have the NDIA to thank for that,' she said.

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