

## Despite ongoing challenges, Sara has continued to achieve her goals

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Sara Fawcett has big dreams. The keen writer is currently working on a book she hopes will be the next Harry Potter.

The Launceston local's creative flair has always been evident, playing musical instruments throughout her life including the violin, harp and piano. She also has a passion for writing and loves animals.

But for Sara, maintaining these hobbies presents more challenges than it would for most people.

Sara has a moderate hearing impairment and severe vision impairment, and was diagnosed with a condition called Wolfram Syndrome as a child.

"As well as my hearing and vision challenges, Wolfram Syndrome has led to balance issues, diabetes and renal and hormonal troubles," Sara said of her diagnosis.

"It is one of those rare genetic conditions that comes as a result of defects in genes, it leads to the degeneration of the central nervous system, although there are many things that could have happened to me in relation to the function of vital organs, which have not happened yet."

Sara's vision and hearing have been deteriorating all her life. She says despite having support for her vision, managing her hearing impairment has been an ongoing challenge.

"I had plenty of help with my vision as I could use magnifying glasses for school and could even use a laptop.

"My hearing presented many challenges and it meant I didn't always hear the teacher's instructions or what peers said while socialising.

"As a result, I became quite insecure for many years.

"My vision and hearing impairments, or at least the insecurity I developed as a result of them, meant I went through high school and my young adult life without friends or the ability to make friends."

Sara joined the NDIS in 2017, and has since received funding for support workers who provide Sara with support with social and recreational activities and in running errands.

She also receives funding for assistive technology to help complete various tasks.

"There is the issue of how to work around the vision and hearing together, since a lot of standard procedures for one or the other don't help, and over my life it's really been a matter

of finding the right type of help.”

Around 12 months ago Sara was able to purchase an app on her phone that photographs text and reads it aloud, along with a Mini Mic – a device that works alongside her cochlear implant so people can speak into the microphone and she can hear them more clearly.

Despite ongoing challenges, Sara has continued to achieve her goals, having completed a journalism degree and now undertaking a second degree in history.

She is currently being supported to find employment, but continues to work on her writing and other hobbies.

“With my sight and hearing deteriorating over the past 20 years, I’ve lost my independence as I’ve grown up rather than gained it.

“The NDIS has eased the strain on both me and my parents significantly, both in terms of the help I can now afford to get to do things and taking the pressure off me financially.

“It has helped enormously.”

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