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Laura Hester spends her weeks like so many 29-year-olds, working, heading to the theatre, going out for dinner with friends and mastering her cooking skills.

The Beulah Park local works part-time at Seymour College and has recently moved into her own unit around the corner from her family home.

But for Laura, a busy social life hasn't always been part of the norm.

Laura has an intellectual disability and autism, and has always faced challenges in social situations.

"Laura couldn't keep friendship groups, she wouldn't go and stay overnight or go out anywhere, she was just happy to sit at home in her room," Laura's mother Lisa said.

While Laura's family were able to fund some regular therapies to support her, the financial burden meant they couldn't focus on long term goals like moving out of home.

Fortunately Laura was able to join the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) when it rolled out in Adelaide 12 months ago, and is now supported to live a more independent life.

"The first goal was just to see if we could improve her social skills because she basically didn't have any."

Laura now receives funding for support workers who help with life skills and social skills, which includes learning about diet, fitness, budgeting, and getting out of her comfort zone to meet new people.

Laura has also been able to learn about public transport and is now able to take the bus or catch an Uber to her various activities.

"Now Laura doesn't have to wait for me to take her anywhere, we don't see her!"

"She's out all the time, and it's been so positive for her.

"She's gone from someone who doesn't want to do anything to now really wanting to reach out and see what she can do, which is amazing!"

Laura also receives funding from the NDIS for physiotherapy, as Laura also has scoliosis.

"Laura has something called ocular nerve aplasia, so it makes all her muscles very weak and her joints extremely flexible, so when she's just walking down the street, her knees just give way, so the physio is helping with that.

“Since she’s been going she’s not falling over as much as she used to. She’s stronger, she’s lost weight and she’s eating better, all of it is improving.”

Thanks to the ongoing support from funded support workers, Laura has now been able to achieve the family’s dream of having her live independently, and just last week she was able to move out on her own.

Laura still visits her parents daily, but is already inviting friends and family around to her place for coffee and afternoon tea.

“Laura is now able to be a normal 29-year-old instead of a dependent 29-year-old that hasn’t got the confidence to make change or move out of her comfort zone.

“She’s been able to grow so much and I just want that to continue.”

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