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Townsville mother of seven, Venetta Masso has been able to engage NDIS provider, Open Minds to support five of her adult children who all have an intellectual disability.

The 56-year old said she is grateful to have five NDIS plans to fund a regular support roster in her home, where Open Minds staff visit daily to help organise John, 39, Gerard, 37, Renee, 31, Alick, 22 and Isiah, 21, then take them out to do meaningful activities.

Photograph by KZ Photography

“Open Minds staff come to the house in the morning. They help them get dressed and help with the cleaning so we are all ready before the next shift comes in. It’s great because they don’t listen to me but they’ll listen to them,” Venetta said with a laugh.

“When the next shift starts, they take them all out to the movies, the library, they go to the community centre, the community garden, they go out fishing, on bus trips to the beach, and they go to the Aboriginal Cultural Centre so they stay connected to their culture.”

Venetta said her children enjoy making sandwiches with staff before they head off on picnics, and when the weather is warmer they love to help organise and cook BBQ’s. “It’s just fantastic,” she said.

“The community garden would have to be one of their favourite things to do. They really enjoy it because other support workers take their clients there too and they all socialise.

“Gerard really loves it there because he gets to see his best mate, Michael. They help each other in the garden and they have a great time.”

While Venetta admits there can be some push back from her children about doing their daily tasks, she can see they are really benefiting from a regular supported routine and learning crucial life skills, so much so, they no longer need support learning to cook.

“We used to have staff come to the house in the afternoons to teach them how to cook supper, but now they know how to cook so we don’t need them anymore,” she said.

You could say Shaquillah, one of the Masso’s Open Minds support workers, is one of the most popular contributors to the house.

“They all look forward to seeing Shaquillah and having a laugh with her,” Venetta said.

Talking to Shaquillah, the feeling is undoubtedly mutual with the young support worker saying, “The Masso’s are just like extended family.

“I love working with these guys,” she said. “It makes me happy to see them achieving – if they are happy, I’m happy!”

“I’m so proud of how much they have been able to overcome and what they are achieving now,” she said.

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