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Transcript for 'Jeremiah is learning key word signing'

Two weeks after becoming an NDIS participant, Jeremiah (JJ) Bender-Christian learnt some sign language and it taught him to communicate his needs for the first time in his life.

Living in a small community on Norfolk Island, with a population of just over 2000 people, the non-verbal 13-year-old, who has autism, was one of the first participants to receive NDIS funding when the scheme rolled out there in July 2018.

Now with the help of service provider Aspect and dedicated Allied Health Assistant, Aiden Bruce, JJ is receiving regular therapy sessions at home and at school.

"This includes speech therapy, where JJ is learning to sign and communicate his needs, and occupational therapy, to assist with his behaviour," Aiden said.

"Our aim is to provide JJ with the skills and support he needs, and deserves, to communicate with his family and the wider community. It's also about ensuring his family and immediate network have the tools they need to understand and support his learning and development too."

Parents, Joel and Nicole, are extremely proud of JJ's achievements and credit the NDIS and Aspect with helping their family to better understand their son's needs.

"Jeremiah has only had regular therapy for a short time but the changes we have seen have been amazing," Joel said.

"After receiving just a couple of weeks of signing therapy, he was using signs to indicate what he wanted for the first time. It was a tremendous step forward," Joel added.

Prior to the NDIS, JJ only received therapy services twice in his entire life!

Aiden said now Aspect Therapy had a base on Norfolk Island, and NDIS funding was available, it could extend its services to people of all ages on the autism spectrum.

"We are really adaptable to people's needs," he said. "We offer Tele-therapy services to people in rural and remote areas and our therapy team can visit people where they feel most comfortable - at home, in an early childhood setting, at school, in a community setting or we can see them at our centre."

Recently, Aspect spent a day on Norfolk Island with JJ's community network - his family, friends, schoolteachers and others.

"We wanted to give JJ's community network a better understanding of his needs and to show them how to communicate with him using the signs he has learnt in therapy," Aiden said.

"The group signing training Aspect provided for key members of JJ's community opened up new possibilities for us," Joel said.

"It's such a joy for us to see our son understanding what we are saying to him, and for us to finally be able understand what he is trying to say back to us," he added.

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