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John Atwood is an accomplished man. He graduated university with a law degree, worked to become a specialist in internal law and travelled the world.

But for John, one of his biggest recent achievements was a simple trip down the road to the local coffee shop.

Three years ago, after returning home from work on a Friday night, John suffered a catastrophic stroke. For John and his family, it changed everything.

“It was a really bad stroke, he nearly died a few times, they said he’d be in ICU for three nights, but he was in there for a month with lots of complications.”

Maree travelled back and forth to Canberra from Brisbane regularly to support John and their mum stayed in Canberra during his four-month stay in Canberra Hospital, before the decision was made that John would be best off closer to home in Brisbane.

It was during this time his family applied for funding from the NDIS, which was formalised the day he was moved to the Royal Brisbane Hospital. He remained for a further four months until he transitioned to long-term accommodation.

Through John’s NDIS funding he has been able to access speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, music therapy and hydrotherapy on a weekly basis with specialist therapists of his choice.

“It was just fantastic, there’s no way we could have afforded to pay for this level of therapy and yet it was so necessary.

“It has been incredible the progress he has made. He couldn’t speak at all, and now he can hold a conversation.

“John is proof that the support is working, he may not ever be completely back to what he was, but he’s getting better and better all the time.”

John also receives NDIS funding for specialist disability accommodation, allowing him to live in a purpose-built apartment at Albany Creek. John has access to 24/7 care, including support workers who visit throughout the day to assist with cooking, cleaning and other household tasks.

John’s support workers also assist him to be more engaged in his community, maintaining his weekly ritual of going to the cinema every Tuesday, visiting art galleries and keeping up his passion for the Brisbane Lions, attending his first match since the stroke, earlier this year.

“This has given John the freedom to do his own thing, he can do what he wants.” Maree said.

Perhaps John’s biggest accomplishment to date was his first trip to the coffee shop down the street on his own, using his electric powered wheelchair.

“For someone who was so independent, and is now supervised 24/7, that step was really fantastic.

“It’s been about a year in the making. He may not ever be able to walk down the road on his own, but the more mobility he has, the more doors open for him.”

John is now working towards a long-term goal of adding to his tally of countries visited, and Maree said that goal has now become a possibility.

“We went away last year for two nights, and up the coast this year, and he’s planning to go to Canberra later this year for a wedding.

“We set the goal for him to travel overseas when we first joined the NDIS in 2016, John couldn’t speak at the time, and spent most of his days in bed. I never thought he would travel again, but it’s now become a real possibility which we hope to achieve next year.”

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