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The NDIS is supporting Beaumaris 20-year-old, Monty Cooper, to pursue his triathlon goals and work in a field he is passionate about.

A familiar face on the local triathlon scene, Monty trains regularly and volunteers one day a week at Giant Ormond bicycle store.

He also works with various NDIS support workers, at GTR Events, which includes setting up events right across Victoria, while competing in various Triathlons himself.

Monty is so well known on the Triathlon circuit, another company, Big Dog Events, has offered him additional work, three days a week when COVID restrictions ease.

Mum, Juliet, said these opportunities motivated Monty to keep achieving personally and professionally.

“If it wasn’t for the NDIS, Monty would not have been able to maintain his job,” she said.

“COVID decimated the events calendar, but fortunately Monty had an Events Traineeship with GTR, was at TAFE, and it was his NDIS funded support workers who assisted him to continue to study and complete his units that actually keep him going.”

Monty has an intellectual disability and Galactosemia, a metabolic disorder affecting his sight. He has access to a wealth of supports, which have kept him active, built his confidence and supported him to become as independent as possible.

“While COVID did stop Monty from working and competing at triathlons, it didn’t stop him from training – he had a virtual running and cycling app he used,” Juliet said.

“It was great,” Monty added. “I made myself an avatar and I could still keep my fitness up!”

“My NDIS support workers also assist me in the gym,” Monty said. “Some of them I’ve known for years, through sporting associations, clubs and Inclusive Sports Training.”

Driving to and from work wasn’t an option for Monty, but he received NDIS transport funding so Juliet got inventive to find him the right support.

“We joined St Kilda Cycling Club so I put the word out for anyone who was road savvy and could ride alongside Monty, and actually keep up, to teach him the road rules,” Juliet said.

Monty now has two people who travel train with him on his bike to and from work and a third who helps with longer sessions.

"I'm getting to the point where I feel I can ride to and from work on my own," Monty said.

Juliet said she is grateful to inclusive employers like GTR and Big Dog Events.

"We are really grateful to employers who can see the value and benefits in hiring people with intellectual disabilities, how it improves staffs' understanding of working with people with disability and fosters inclusion," she said.

"We thought it was going to be hard to find support workers to work away with Monty while he did six-day events around Victoria, but both companies have allowed their staff to do additional hours, so Monty has on-the-job-support.

"Monty's NDIS funding is allocated to the person working with him and we also use some of it for personal development, so staff can learn strategies on how to work best with people with disability."

Always aiming high, Monty has some impressive sporting accolades already worth mentioning, and proud mum Juliet said "He has exceeded all my expectations.

"In 2016/2017 Monty won the Multi-Class Duathlon and the Multi-Class Triathlon series with Sole Motive.

"He also did the Sprint Gatorade races and Challenge Melbourne Sprint Distance race with mainstream peers, and he's just become the first athlete with an intellectual disability selected for the Triathlon Victoria Development Squad."

"There's still a lot I'd love to do," Monty said.

"My goal is to go to Hawaii and compete in the Ironman World Championships, but it's a five year plan."

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