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Ask Ben Paior-Smith how he came to name his clothing retail business and he’ll gladly demonstrate.

“I’m a happy person and when I’m happy, well, it’s just Hazzah!” said Ben, laughing and swinging both arms up high.

For years now, whenever the young Adelaide man feels especially joyful, he throws his arms into the air and exclaims, “Hazzah!”.

So, he says, it was an obvious choice for the name of his own small business or micro-enterprise.

“Hazzah means to be happy, that’s why I like it,” said Ben, 20, who lives with Down syndrome and is supported by the NDIS.

Ben is feeling especially happy these days because Hazzah is a dream come true, despite the challenges of launching a new business during a global pandemic.

“It was my dream to start an apparel business, to meet new people and build a community where people can be themselves and have fun,” said Ben.

“And I’m just loving it right now, I’m loving it, I’m loving the community and running my own business.”

Ben creates original designs for t-shirts and caps, inspired by the things he loves, including DJing, music, surf culture, and sport.

He manages the micro-business himself, with help from a team with a facilitator and personal assistant, funded through his NDIS plan.

Registered NDIS provider, Community Living Project (CLP), provides Ben with microenterprise support, while a team of volunteers, including some of Ben’s neighbours and family members, form a Project Enterprise Group, which supports Ben with business, accounting and design expertise.

Ben’s NDIS plan also provides him with an assistant graphic designer, Dylan DuCaine, who helps Ben turn his original ideas into eye-catching, vibrant designs

“Ben is the boss, Ben comes up with all of the ideas and he and Dylan work together on the computer,” said Ben’s mother Sam Paior.

Since launching Hazzah last June, Ben has been successfully growing a steady crowd of buyers and supporters for his new brand.

He has more than 450 followers on social media, and uses an effective idea for sharing the Hazzah logo as widely as possible—people who buy his shirts and caps send Ben photos of themselves wearing his designs, which he posts online.

“We are getting a lot of positive comments and it’s going very well,” said Ben. “I’m very happy and excited.”

Ben says he’s also feeling happy about his NDIS support, which has helped him to grow the skills he needs to run his new business and become more independent.

NDIS-funded support workers are also helping Ben to learn to cook, do housework, use gym equipment, and use public transport independently.

Ben says the NDIS has made a big difference to his life. His goal is to run a successful business and buy his own home to live independently.

“The biggest difference there has been is I have the free will and capacity to go out somewhere and have an independent life,” he said.

“NDIS helped me with my hopes and dreams and to be more independent.”

For Ben, Hazzah is more than a clothing business. He says it’s about acceptance and embracing each person’s unique self, and having fun.

Meanwhile, the young entrepreneur, who has previously been a star athlete and has worked nationally as a public advocate for people with disability, is now further expanding his skills. He attends a Music and Media program with NDIS registered provider, Lift Up Voices, and film studies at Flinders University, through the Up the Hill project, supported by an NDIS-funded mentor.

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