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Moonah NDIS participant, Katherine Black is celebrating one year, living independently in her own unit with reduced supports – something she said people doubted she could do.

The 62-year-old, who has Down syndrome, said she was living in a unit, managed as a group home with 24/7 care, but didn’t need around the clock care because she was capable and confident enough to do most daily living tasks herself.

Engaging her chosen local providers, Mel, from Life Choices Support and Catherine Baker from Coordination Plus, together the women set about making Katherine’s goal a reality.

Now proving her doubters wrong, Katherine is enjoying life in her own unit, feeling quite proud and accomplished with less support.

Her increased independence means she no longer needs the same level of NDIS funding because she doesn’t need to access Supported Independent Living (SIL) funds anymore.

“Living independently has been my goal for years. I wanted to prove to everyone I could do it, and I did,” Katherine said proudly.

“My unit is lovely; it’s wonderful. I’m really enjoying being here, and Bobbie (the Budgie) and I love watching the Tipping Point and the Masked Singer on TV,” she added.

Katherine’s coordinator of supports, Catherine Baker, said over the years Katherine has developed “a real confidence about what she wants from life”.

“Katherine had been living at Newtown, in sort of a group home situation, but she didn’t like living there. She found it noisy and disruptive, and she didn’t really need all that support. We could see it was really affecting her health,” she said.

“Now she’s got this lovely little one-bedroom unit, with a kitchen, meals area and lounge. She’s so much happier and her general health and wellbeing has really improved.”

Catherine said working closely with Mel and her team, and understanding Katherine’s strengths and needs, they’ve managed to build a strong support network around her.

“Katherine’s occupational therapist put some great strategies in place so now she has a communication book she fills out if there’s anything concerning her or if she needs help with getting anything done,” Catherine said.

“To support Katherine to maintain a healthy lifestyle, another support worker, Ari, comes in to assist her with meal prep during the week, and to ensure Katherine gets a break she has Meals

on Wheels delivered twice a week, which she heats up in the microwave.

“Katherine also has a cleaner who comes in once a week. They work together, cleaning the bathroom, tidying up the unit, and making sure everything is hygienic,” Catherine said.

“I have weekends to myself,” Katherine added. “It’s nice. I can walk to the shops if I need anything, like milk or bread, and Bobbie and I can relax and watch TV.”

Catherine said it has taken a few years of intensive work to get Katherine to this point.

“She had to achieve lots of tasks along the way to show people she could take responsibility before she moved out to live independently,” she said.

“After living in a group home, Katherine had to learn a lot of new skills especially around understanding personal relationships and what’s required to be a good neighbour, but we are continuing to support her with these skills and she’s been doing extremely well.

“Initially, Katherine’s brother was concerned about how she was going to go; we all were, but you’ve got to give people a chance, and thanks to a good planner and flexible funding, allowing support workers to come in, Katherine is now living the life she has longed for.”

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