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Kristian’s keen eye for performance and bringing his visions to life on film are key themes in scripting a fulfilling life of independence for the Lismore local.

The NDIS participant, who was born with osteogenesis imperfecta, has been making his voice heard, literally. Combining independent living with a host of much-loved hobbies, Kristian’s “freedom of choice” saw the talented 25-year-old take to the stage with Bangalow Theatre Company for a role in well-known rock musical, Rent.

“I was in the Ensemble of Rent, and I loved it so much,” Kristian said.

“There was a lot of socialising and good friendships to come out of that. I hadn’t done a lot of performing as a band I was in went under, so, I didn’t have a lot of creative avenues for performance, but Rent restarted that for me.

“It was good to feel really included, and everything was accessible and inclusive.”

The role in Rent was another move forward for Kristian, who, as a foster child originally from Liverpool in New South Wales, found his way to Lismore via Grafton and Murwillumbah.

Managing osteogenesis imperfect – which causes bones to break very easily – Kristian has always found ways to engage in activities.

During mainstream schooling, Kristian found a love for tennis. While not without incident, Kristian’s “stubborn” nature saw him take to the court regularly, as other creative pursuits including music and being behind the camera shaped his path.

“School was fairly normal for me, and with sports, I mainly stuck to things I knew were safe,” Kristian said.

“But, I used to watch the Australian and US (tennis) Opens on TV, and that turned into me wanting to play it. I just loved hitting balls, and I had seven broken wrists, but my stubborn butt just couldn’t get over it.”

After finding his way to Lismore for University, Kristian stayed on to create the life he wanted in the Northern Rivers’ regional centre.

Engaging in wheelchair tennis, Kristian’s continued push for sustained independence has been made possible through the NDIS. Helping him to thrive off court and stage, Kristian uses his funding to access in-home supports and assistive technology such as his wheelchair.

“I have support workers who come over Monday to Friday, and sometimes on Saturdays,” Kristian said.

“They help with the domestic stuff, and support me with cooking and shopping. I had 12 performances of Rent over two weeks, and the support workers also helped me get there and back for that.

“I also have assistance from cleaners through my NDIS plan, and I’m keeping at it with theatre, music and tennis.”

While that support became all the more crucial for Kristian in the lead-up to the COVID-19 pandemic after an infection to an injury nearly cost him an arm, he’s determined to continue his creative pursuits.

Highlighting his creative pursuits, Kristian’s journey has seen him take part in a video to raise awareness and celebrate this year’s International Day of People with Disability (IDPWD) on December 3.

Produced by the NDIA, the video will be broadcast on NDIS Social Media platforms on IDPwD.

With Rent ticked off, Kristian will now focus on his long-term goal of finding sustained employment

“I’ve got two computers for streaming, a couple of microphones, a green screen on a roller, and I’ve recently started a YouTube channel,” Kristian said.

“It’s me playing music and song covers… I’m mainly a vocalist, but I’m also hoping to find (employment) in video editing or behind the scenes performance stuff.”

In the shorter term, however, increasing his independence is important to Kristian, and he can’t wait to get back to plenty of socialising.

“I’m maintaining as much independence as I can,” Kristian said. “With stuff like support work and cleaning, it’s easier to get stuff done… it’s about personal choice and freedom for me.”

Kristian's story showcases the impact we can all have when we see people for who they are and the things they can do.

To help celebrate the day you can download the IDPwD pack including a social media pack, poster, virtual meeting background and email signature block on the IDPwD page.

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