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Will Scott-Jeffs dreamt of working in a job he enjoyed where he could wear corporate clothing and carry a briefcase.

Will, 26, has autism and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).

"Learning to live with autism and OCD has been a struggle," he said. "I overthink things and they become huge in my head."

Now, thanks to a supportive mum and an employment project funded through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Will is working not one job, but 2. And both are with the organisations that put him on the path to employment success.

"I cannot begin to tell you what these employment outcomes mean to me," Will says.

"Two years ago, I didn't think I would ever get a job doing what I love. Now I'm saving for a car and I recently returned from a trip to see my family in the U.K. And I've moved into my own unit."

Will, of Perth, has worked as a Peer Group Researcher for NDIS service provider Rocky Bay since February 2022. He gets client feedback on what is working, and what they would like changed.

Since then, he also began work as a local area coordinator Support Officer for NDIS Partner in the Community APM, with its customised employment project. The project is offered in Western Australia, Darwin, and parts of regional Queensland.

Will brings digital marketing and video editing skills to the same project that helped him as an NDIS participant.

"To be able to see both sides of the coin, as a participant and as an employee, has really made me feel worthy and positive about myself," Will says.

Will's opportunities came after he and mum Ruth heard that his NDIS local area coordinator supported connections for participants who were searching for employment and required an individualised approach.

APM runs workshops with participants, support providers, and local employers to explore and tailor job opportunities based on participants' skills and interests.

"Will's local area coordinator explained all the employment support options and how the NDIS could support participants," Ruth said.

“We received useful handouts, including the NDIS booklet Let's talk about work, which helped us prepare for Will’s planning meeting, and helped him to receive additional NDIS funding for ‘Finding and Keeping a Job’ support that we weren’t aware of!

“The success stories were amazing. People had micro-business enterprises and others found successful, meaningful, award-wage employment, which gave us hope.”

Will’s request for funding to explore employment options and build his work skills was approved, which set the process in motion.

“First, we attended a mentoring session which clarified what was expected of Will and which support providers could assist him,” Ruth said.

“We linked Will with one of the customised employment support providers and staff visited us at home. They talked to us about the ‘discovery’ process and worked with Will to discover his likes, dislikes, strengths, what work means to him, and his support needs.

“It was a great process and it really helped to build an employment picture for Will.”

Ruth said while the discovery process took 10 months, it was comprehensive and successful.

“It showed us what work environments suited Will, the workplace supports he needed, and the jobs they could customise to suit him. It also included areas where he could improve and further develop, and a job was customised for him at Rocky Bay,” she said.

Will then went through an informal interview and 2 days later he was offered the job.

Now he’s going from strength to strength.

“Will’s presentation skills are improving. His manager has introduced new challenges in public speaking to larger audiences, and he is advocating for the establishment of new customised employment networks in Perth,” Ruth says.

“My adult son who 18 months ago didn’t believe anyone would hire him, has changed into a positive, caring, and confident young man. I can’t thank everyone enough.”

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