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Singer-songwriter Steve Sparrow's life changed forever when he received a Christmas present from his parents as an wide-eyed 10-year-old.

"For Christmas in 1984, my parents bought me my first guitar," the 48-year-old from Brisbane's bayside said. "Music has always played a major part in my life."

Steve, who was born blind after contracting Norrie disease, knew what he wanted out of life the moment he picked up that guitar.

"Before the guitar, I had some keyboards, which I was really bad at," Steve said.

"The keyboards were a chore. But when I got the guitar, that changed everything. It was never practice - it became an obsession.

"I can't imagine a life without a guitar. It's a part of what I do. It's part of who I am."

Still in school, Steve formed a duo, The Sparrows, with sister Michelle. They performed at country music festivals both here and abroad before Steve went solo in the 1990s.

Steve says there's no better feeling than to be on stage entertaining a crowd.

He says he feels the same energy when on stage as sighted musicians, with some subtle differences.

"The energy of a live audience is full on but, as a blind person, you do tend to interpret it a bit differently," Steve says.

"A sighted performer might see a guy in the crowd and imagine a song he might enjoy.

"I can't do that. But I'm a good listener and I tend to work off reactions."

When he's not performing in pubs, clubs and festivals around southeast Queensland, Steve works with other artists at Sparrow Sound Studio, his home recording rooms.

He also works as a producer for Reading Radio, a not-for-profit organisation servicing southeast Queensland's vison-impaired and blind communities.

In 2022, Steve was nominated a second time for Blind Australia of the Year and performed at the awards night in October.

"It was a great honour to be nominated," Steve said. "It's great to get recognised for the work that you do."

Steve is in the throes of finishing a new album called Now and Forever, with the title track dedicated to his wife, Karen. It should be available early in the new year.

His previous album in 2017, Paint Your Cactus Green, included the single Social Network Freak, which made it to number one on the Australian Country Music Chart.

A NDIS participant since 2019, Steve uses assistive technology such as a screen reader and has help with transportation as well as domestic duties around the family home.

“My quality of life has improved in many ways since joining the NDIS,” the father of one said.

“In the days before NDIS, you’d have to shell out for technology and other supports. It was not an easy thing to keep on funding.

“Now I can easily get to jam sessions I may not otherwise have got to. I can keep the house maintained. I can get a lot more things done.

“It’s a helping hand that can make a world of difference.”

N.B. The NDIS is now providing support to more than 555,000 Australians, with more than half receiving supports for the first time.

Steve Sparrow is one of more than 111,000 in Queensland benefitting from the NDIS.

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