Kez and Andrew from Ballarat show disability is no obstacle to true love

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For Kez and Andrew, Valentine’s Day is special.

It’s a day to reflect on their relationship and the love and admiration they have for each other.

The 2 Ballarat NDIS participants, who both have an intellectual disability, say they always celebrate Valentine’s Day, and this year is no different.

“We’re planning on a nice dinner and going to the movies,” Kez said.

“It’s going to be fun,” Andrew added.

Ironically, when mum Trish took 8-week-old Kez, now 32, to Playhouse in Ballarat (an early intervention support service), mum Cathy was there with 3-year-old Andrew, now 35.

Trish said as time went on Kez and Andrew grew up mixing in the same social circles.

“Their friendship just grew from there.

"When they both did swimming, bowling, and a bit of basketball at the Special Olympics, their friendship developed.

"In the past 5 or 6 years they have become quite fond of each other, identifying as boyfriend and girlfriend,” Trish said.

“As humans, friendships and relationships are a basic need.

"We all develop skills to create sound ones.

"For Kez and Andrew, being able to build these life skills has given them space to nurture a sound friendship where they can be happy and support each other.

“We look for partners who we can rely on, to listen to our concerns, to help us celebrate our achievements, to just be there for support.

"Kez and Andrew are no different.

"This is how they operate.

"They both live full lives with work, programs, sports, social and family activities.”

Trish said with NDIS supports and plenty of informal family support, over time, Kez and Andrew have learnt to respect each other’s needs, likes, interests and personal space.

“They love preparing meals together, watching movies or just singing and dancing to their favourite music,” she said.

“They also spend time apart pursing their own individual interests, which is key to their relationship.

“With Kez and Andrew’s NDIS funding they both have access to support workers who assist them with some activities, and they also have a great family network who enjoy supporting them too.”

Like any other parents, Trish and Cathy want nothing more than for their children to enjoy a long, happy, and fulfilling life.

“Cathy and I have built a solid, trusting relationship with Kez and Andrew.

"We’ve always been open and honest with them, and they come to us with all sorts of questions, and we happily answer,” Trish said.

“It’s really worked well for us – having their trust, being open and honest and putting things simply,” she said.

Recent NDIS Annual Participant and Family and Carer Outcomes reports indicate Trish and Cathy are among many parents who are seeing positive changes to their families thanks to the NDIS.

The number of families and carers more confident about the future of their family as a result of the NDIS has increased by 80 per cent (for participants who have received NDIS supports for 5 years).

Recent data also showed 78 per cent of NDIS participants aged 15 and over have reported being able to choose how to spend their spare time – a 34 per cent relative increase compared to 58 per cent upon entering the Scheme.

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