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Melbourne teenager Eshan Lakhani may be a great drummer, but when it comes to empowering people with a disability, he wants to be the frontman.

Eshan, 13, of Glen Waverley, is the youngest person with a premium busking permit from Melbourne City Council, having held it for the past 3 years.

A National Insurance Disability Scheme (NDIS) participant since 2017, Eshan lives with intellectual disability, developmental delay, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and heart issues.

Through his NDIS plan, Eshan accesses speech and occupational therapies, physiotherapy and sees a psychologist.

His mother, Erum, says Eshan uses these supports to foster his independence and community participation.

‘The NDIS has been a blessing for us,’ Erum said.

‘Eshan has been able to benefit from supports tailored to his needs.

‘Without these services, I could not imagine what Eshan’s life would be like.’

Erum, a registered nurse, and husband Imran, a migration agent, moved to Australia from Pakistan in 2006.

Born in 2009 with hypoxia (low levels of oxygen in the blood), Eshan had many medical emergencies.

By the time he was 2 years old, Eshan was diagnosed with developmental delay and had difficulty speaking.

It was then his parents noticed their son began to make drumbeats with his hands, using anything he could to create percussive sounds.

Eshan’s world changed when he received a toy drum kit as a 2-year-old.

By the age of 6, Eshan began playing in public and entering competitions. A year later, he was representing Australia at an arts festival in Lisbon, Portugal.

He has also performed at Rod Laver Arena, Melbourne Exhibition Centre, and the Palais Theatre.

Surprisingly, the larger the audience, the more relaxed Eshan is.

‘I am never anxious when I play,’ Eshan said. ‘Playing drums gives me great happiness.’

On most weekends, Eshan’s parents drive him to a busking site and watch his shows before helping him pack up his kit.

‘When I go busking, everyone cheers for me,’ Eshan said. ‘I love to entertain. The bigger the audience, the better.’

Before the NDIS, the Lakhanis had to rely on a mix of public and private medical services. Erum says it was costly and hard to find.

‘Sometimes, as a parent of child with a disability, you feel that you are not doing enough for them,’ Erum said.

‘For some people, it can be hard to speak up and ask for help. But if you don’t, your child is going to miss out.

‘The NDIS has played a crucial role in Eshan’s growth and success.

‘Eshan’s happiness wouldn’t be possible without the incredible network of support around him.

‘With these supports, Eshan can improve his quality of life and do the things he loves. This wouldn’t be possible without the NDIS.’

Not content with his mastery of the drums, Eshan wants to follow in the footsteps of his idol, pop star Justin Bieber.

‘One day, I would like to play with Justin Bieber,’ Eshan said.

‘He’s a great singer and he likes to play the drums. I want to be just like him.’

Aside from entertaining, Eshan wants to use his voice to encourage people with disability to follow their dreams.

‘Eshan has a passion to be an ambassador for the benefits of the NDIS and for people with a disability,’ Erum said.

‘He wants to share his triumphs and challenges to motivate others to be the best they can be.

‘Eshan wants to make a positive impact on the lives of others.

‘He has a bright future ahead of him.’

N.B. The NDIS is now providing support to more than 592,000 Australians, with more than half receiving supports for the first time.

Eshan is one of more than 158,000 in Victoria benefitting from the NDIS.

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