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Angela Kalantzis, of Brisbane, is a driven and compassionate business leader.

Her mission is to connect people with a kind and supportive community, one that she created herself.

Angela leads The Brain Injury Community, a charity that provides support services to people affected by an acquired brain injury.

Angela is able to meet the personal and physical demands of leading a not-for-profit organisation thanks to supports funded through her NDIS plan.

In 2012 Angela suffered a brain injury when the lid of a camper trailer fell, trapping her head against the trailer.

The injury left Angela with fatigue and problems with language and cognition.

'I was discharged from hospital very quickly with no supports in place. I did get to a very dark place,' Angela says.

'I would still be lying in a dark bedroom if it weren't for the NDIS.'

Angela founded The Brain Injury Community 9 years later, in 2021.

'Starting The Brain Injury Community came from listening to other people and hearing what they were crying out for,' Angela says.

'I went into rescue mode, and thought 'how can I help?''

The Brain Injury Community is a first point of call for links to supports and therapies when people leave the hospital system.

But its main aim is to help people make friends.

'It's all about helping people meet someone who they can call or text. Not mum and dad, or their partner or carer. Someone who understands,' Angela says.

When Angela's workload increased her NDIS supports became even more important.

'The Brain Injury Community grew rapidly last year, and a lot of that responsibility falls on my shoulders to be the face of the charity at all the picnics and events,' Angela says.

'I really struggled with that so I went back to my occupational therapist, to counselling, and to the neuropsychologist. I wouldn't be able to do this work without NDIS support.'

Like most effective leaders, Angela forms the right partnerships so she can make a difference where it is most needed.

NDIS partner in the community, Social Futures, has been working with Angela to expand The Brain Injury Community into NSW through their Change Makers Program.

Social Futures' Community Development Coordinator, Gemma Ferris, says anyone who dreams of making their community more inclusive can be part of Change Makers.

'The Change Makers are the innovators, the dreamers, the do-ers, like Angela!' Gemma says.

Along the way, Angela has learned what it takes to be a woman living with disability and running a charity.

'As someone with a disability trying to run a charity and succeed in business, the biggest challenge is getting people to take you seriously. When you tell them you have a brain injury you can see them go, 'yeah nup'. They'll give you a few minutes of their time then walk away,' Angela says.

'As a woman with a disability, there's fire in that belly because not only do we have to prove ourselves because we are women, we also have to prove ourselves because we have a disability.'

But the hard work by Angela and her team has not gone unrecognised.

The Brain Injury Community was a Finalist in the 2023 Australian Small Business Champion Awards.

'That was way awesome and also very humbling. We have a wonderful group of women working with us, including my support workers and volunteers,' Angela says.

'For the business community to recognise the work we are doing and see what can be achieved, that was a fantastic moment.'

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