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NDIS participant Shee Lah Moo is a young man on a mission.

Now with the right supports he’s determined to make his employment goal, to become a disability support worker, a reality.

A Karen refugee, turning 18 on Harmony Day (March 21) Shee Lah says he considers himself and his family lucky to have fled Myanmar’s civil war to arrive safely here in Australia in 2007 to start their new life.

‘My family and I are just so grateful for all the amazing support we’ve received since we have been here. Everyone has been incredibly helpful, lovely and kind,’ he said.

Settling in Bendigo amid a large Karen community the Moo family felt welcome instantly.

The community rallied around the family linking them to local multicultural services. Karen translators supported them to learn about Australia and to understand the language.

At the time, Shee Lah said signs of his disability weren’t obvious until he was in school.

‘I always had trouble with my work and spelling. It was hard to remember things. I needed a lot of support,’ he said.

About to start high school, Shee Lah’s parents reached out for help.

Shee Lah was diagnosed with a mild intellectual disability and DiGeorge syndrome, a condition caused when a small part of chromosome 22 is missing from the brain.

Symptoms vary but can include low muscle tone, poor vision, hearing loss and speech and learning difficulties.

By chance neighbour, Tah Dah Say Noe, also a Karen refugee, was working for Amicus, a local disability support service, as a support worker.

Tah Dah explained to the Moo family the services Amicus provides, its large multicultural support worker network and how many were Karen.

Tah Dah also explained about the NDIS process and how Shee Lah could be eligible to receive supports to help build skills and find work.

Shee Lah said he and his family were really happy to learn about the NDIS.

‘I was supported to apply, and I was successful,’ he said.

‘What I really love most about using my NDIS funding is I have the freedom to choose which support worker I want to work with.

‘I chose Pla Gay. She is great. She’s also Karen and I really connect with her.

‘Sometimes when we go out, I don’t feel like she’s my support worker. I feel more like she’s my big sister. We get on so well.’

Pla Gay supports Shee Lah 2 days a week.

‘Pla Gay helps me study and learn new skills. We go swimming and shopping.

‘She helped me practise getting my Learners permit. Now I have it,’ he said proudly.

Pla Gay is also supporting Shee Lah with his employment goals, utilising the employment assistance funding in his NDIS plan.

‘We’ve talked about my future employment goals. After all the help and support I’ve had I want to be a support worker so I can help others,’ he said.

‘I’m in my final year of school. When I finish, I’d like to do a Certificate III in Disability.’

In the meantime, Pla Gay is also supporting Shee Lah to find casual work. She spends time building his confidence and social skills to help him feel job ready.

‘Pla Gay has helped me do my resume, write cover letters and apply for jobs,’ he said.

‘She’s also taken me around to a lot of local businesses, so I can hand in my resume.

‘All this support has been incredible and I’m looking forward to helping others.’

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