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NDIS participant Karan Nagrani says Australia has ‘let him be who he is – a blind, partially deaf, gay, man of colour.’

‘I’m thriving because of where I am, who I am and the people who surround me,’ he said.

Karan’s NDIS supports have helped him lead his best life, working at Guide Dogs Australia, and being active in his community as a disability and gay rights advocate.

Reflecting on his accomplishments and the support he’s had over the years here in Australia, Karan says there’s still a lot of people who just don’t realise how lucky they are.

‘Travel overseas and you will see how good we have it here in Australia. Other countries don’t have the services and supports we have. Many go without, some even die,’ he said.

‘It really upsets me when I hear people complaining about things or bashing critical organisations like the NDIS. Yes, it can be a clunky process because it’s still evolving and it’s taxpayers money, but I feel some Australians really do have a sense of entitlement.

‘I wish people would be a little more grateful for what we have instead of complaining,’ he said.

Karan’s ‘Australian love story’ began in 2006 when he arrived in Perth.

From Indian descent Karan was just 18 when he left New Delhi after graduating high school. His father was keen for him to study abroad, so he travelled to Malaysia.

There Karan started a bachelor’s degree in mass communication. He had a successful first year, but his father felt he would get a much better education in Australia.

Continuing his degree at Curtin University in Western Australia, Karan graduated in 2008.

‘At the time there was a population shortage, so the West Australian Government sponsored me to become a resident,’ he said.

Now 38, Karan said his decision to remain living in Australia was life changing.

‘It really worked out well and I fell in love with Australia,’ he said.

‘This country has given me so much. I’ve lived here longer than I did in India.

‘It’s a strange feeling because now when I’m in Australia I feel at home and when I visit India, I feel like I’m a foreigner.’

In India Karan led a very comfortable life, but one thing weighed on his mind. Back then it was a crime to be gay. Living there he couldn’t live his true life. In Australia he could.

With sight initially, Karan worked full-time in marketing, his chosen career.

‘It was a job I loved but with Ushers syndrome my eyesight began to deteriorate, so I had to give it up,’ he said.

Now with only 3% vision left and with hearing loss Karan hasn’t let his condition stop him from continuing to pursue his life goals.

He’s continued to enjoy life. He’s happy married to David, ‘the love of his life’. The couple live in an apartment in Hawthorn; they both work and are proud parents to Ellie and Henry, 2 French Bulldogs they adore.

To ensure Karan remains self-sufficient he uses his NDIS funding to employ Antony, a support worker, for 4 hours a week.

‘Antony is great. He’s an allrounder. He always works with me to prepare food for David and I and the dogs. We also clean, iron, fold and change the bedding together,’ he said.

‘If I need to go to the doctor or to the shops to get something Antony will take me.’

Karan says he enjoys working part-time for Guide Dogs Victoria in corporate community and donor engagement.

When he’s not at work, he’s out in the community as a disability advocate and motivational speaker. He attends events, festivals and workplaces sharing his lived experience.

Utilising the accessibility on his smart phone it’s clear Karan loves what he does.

With his profile rising he now has national, state and local media approaching him for regular comment.

‘I want others to realise they are not alone,’ Karan said. ‘I want to better educate society on building greater equality and inclusion. No matter who you are or what your background is, everyone should enjoy a more fulfilling and equitable life.’

Karan also develops, films and edits regular informative Instagram content. He posts about vision and hearing loss and highlights topics and thoughts on subjects including disability and LGBTIQA+ matters to his thousands of followers.

Karan also discusses inclusive respectful ways to engage with him and others who are proud to represent the Disability and LGBTIQA+ communities.

‘For a blind person with such limited sight, I’m glad I can still create graphics and edit films. I’m pretty fly for a blind guy,’ he laughs.

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