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After a near death experience, Yodit Yeabiyo fled to Australia to seek a safer life and avoid years of mandatory military service.

Yodit was born and grew up in Eritrea, in the northeast of the African continent.

When she was 17 Yodit was involved in a serious motor accident on route to Sudan, while escaping an unsafe camp.

Yodit nearly died. Her main injury was below the right knee. Poor treatment led to a bone infection, so her leg was amputated above the knee.

‘I’m happy because I’m alive,’ Yodit says, through an interpreter.

Now aged 26, Yodit lives in the relative safety of suburban Adelaide. She is making a new life and working towards independence with support from the NDIS.

In 2017, Yodit’s sister, who was already in Adelaide, sponsored Yodit and her brother to relocate and resettle in Australia. Yodit’s sister supported her and her brother with some of the costs of resettlement.

‘We left because we were not happy, and we wanted to avoid national service,’ Yodit says.

All Eritreans aged between 18 and 40 are required to do national military service. The service is of an indefinite length, with an average of 6 and a half years.

‘I’m very happy to be in Australia,’ Yodit says.

‘I got good treatment here, and the (NDIS funded) prosthetic leg. So I’m much better now.’

Yodit’s mobility is significantly impacted by her amputation. She is unable to walk without NDIS funded mobility aids, which enable her to safely move around in the community.

Yodit uses a powered wheelchair and elbow crutches. The crutches required an NDIS funded physiotherapist to ensure she was using them with correct posture and technique.

Throughout her settlement Yodit has been supported by the Australian Migrant Resource Centre (AMRC), an independent non-government agency and NDIS provider that supports migrants and refugees in South Australia.

The AMRC team ensures Yodit's support is culturally appropriate. Her first NDIS funded support worker spoke in Yodit's first language of Tigrinya.

Yodit has another support worker now, who is originally from Afghanistan. She helps Yodit with cleaning, cooking, shopping, and transport to appointments.

'If things are not working with my support worker I have the option to change, but it's all working well,' Yodit says.

The AMRC also coordinated support for Yodit to study for a certificate II in food processing at TAFE, and liaised with an NDIS funded occupational therapist for her home modifications.

Yodit's NDIS support, and her own effort, is aimed at moving her closer to her main goal of being independent. Getting a driver's license is an important part of that goal, so the AMRC coordinated NDIS funded occupational therapy for driving assessment and instruction.

She is also currently supported to study English and computer literacy at TAFE, which Yodit hopes will lead to employment.

'After my English improves I would be happy to work in any job that suits my situation,' Yodit says.

Yodit wants to raise a family in Australia, and she is grateful for NDIS support.

'Life would be very hard for me without the NDIS. It would be hard to get to appointments on public transport when I'm carrying things, to prepare for a job, all of these things that will help with my independence,' Yodit says.

'The NDIS helps a lot.'

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