

Living independently in Kingston

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participant, Paul Castles is now living the life he chooses after receiving Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) funding, to help him move from the nursing home he was living in to Supported Independent Living (SIL) in Kingston.

Paul, 58, who has Down syndrome, was placed in a Tasmanian nursing home, the only aged care facility able to take him and his ageing mother, Lorna, after his dad passed away and they could no longer manage living in their Devonport home.

Paul's brother, Gerard said he could see Lorna and Paul were having difficulty managing their day-to-day lives so he started looking for an aged care facility who would care for them both.

"There was only one nursing home willing to take care of Paul and mum together," said Gerard.

"It was a great facility.

"It gave them adjoining rooms and they really got a new lease on life.

"It was the only facility that would guarantee us Paul could still live there if mum did pass away."

Five years later, and with Lorna about to turn 101 years of age, Gerard thought it was time to support Paul to leave the nursing home so he could start living his own life.

"Paul's had an amazing rich life in Devonport, but it gradually diminished as he spent more time in aged care, so I put the wheels in motion to get him moved out so he could re-join his community," said Gerard.

"I did know a little bit about the NDIS.

"I was a board member at Headway, who support people with acquired brain injuries, and I was fortunate to reconnect with its former CEO, Darren, who had become an NDIS Support Coordinator.

"Darren is fantastic.

"I think with the NDIS most people don't know what they can ask for, and people who have a sense of what they can ask for, don't know how to ask for it," continued Gerard.

"Darren helped us navigate the process.

"I was really active in engaging with Darren and building a good network of people around Paul, and asking them how they can help Paul lead the life he could live.

"So together we found disability support provider, Able Australia.

"It was incredible to have a great team to guide us

through the steps.

"Paul's now living in a brand-new home, in Kingston, where I live.

"He is sharing with Sean, his housemate, and he just loves it.

"We've been able to set up one-on-one supports while we gradually reintegrate him back into the community.

"Over time Paul had become very isolated," commented Gerard.

"He wouldn't go out and he's been a bit nervous about things, so we developed a six to 12-month plan to gradually reintroduce him back into his community to lessen any anxiety.

"We've started slow, but his world is starting to open up."

Gerard said since Paul has been living out of the nursing home he's noticed a lot of positive changes in his younger brother.

"He left the nursing home and he's never looked back," said Gerard.

"Now he's happy, he is communicating more and he's been incredibly flexible.

"We were all a bit nervous about how this move would pan out, but he's been better than anyone had expected."

Gerard said about three years ago Paul stopped travelling in cars.

"No one knew why," said Gerard.

"He just wouldn't leave the nursing home.

He wouldn't travel to Hobart for family gatherings or anything like that so now we've started him off with small goals.

"We've managed to get him back in the car to go on a few short trips.

"Paul loves animals, and there's lots of wallabies around Kingston so his support worker has been taking him out for small drives at night to see them.

"He gets so excited.

"He just loves it.

"What we are working towards is gradually getting him moving again so he can visit the family in Hobart and do all the activities he used to do: special Olympics, going to the footy and going to the trots to watch his cousin's horses race, so that's our medium-term goal."

Gerard said one-on-one support has been crucial in helping Paul to regain his independence.

"Back in the nursing home, Paul wasn't sick and he was quiet so he didn't get much contact," Gerard said.

"Whereas now he's got a plan, he's got goals and peo-

ple to support him.

"Everything is working the way it's supposed to.

"It's also given us back time.

"It's allowed me to be Paul's big brother again and not

feel like I'm his case manager.

"It's taken a lot of time, effort and planning, but it's all been worth it."

For more information about the NDIS, visit www.ndis.gov.au



COMMENT COLUMN

with Member for Nelson, Meg Webb MLC

Do elections bring out the worst in politics?

It's such a shame that at the time we are asked to choose our political representatives, they often provide us with a poor impression of their values and fitness for office.

Whether it is bickering and factional fights within parties, nasty secrets emerging from people's social media histories, or just the aggressive negativity and sniping that becomes the default setting of our adversarial, two-party dominated political culture, it's enough to make voters pray for it all to be over as quickly as possible.

A particular bug bear of mine is when the two major parties spend so much time trying to scare and bully the Tasmanian voters into a majority government outcome.

Of course, each party would like to govern in majority.

With a majority it's easier for them to do what they want and push their own ideological agendas.

But it doesn't always result in good policy, good legislation or the best interests of the whole community being delivered.

A minority government means a government that has to work hard, be reasonable, put aside some of the more extreme ideological policies and negotiate.

I think most Tasmanians would like to see their State

Government doing just that; working hard to deliver reasonable, negotiated outcomes.

A minority government is likely to be a government that is more open, transparent and accountable.

It's much harder to keep secrets, withhold information and prevent access when you don't have absolute power.

Minority governments are a very normal part of many parliamentary democracies around the world.

They are effective, efficient and generally very productive.

If the Tasmanian voters deliver a minority government at this state election, then the major parties should respect the views of the community and work with that result.

There's an arrogance in any political party insisting that it won't respect the will of the Tasmanian people if an election delivers a diverse, non-majority parliament.

It's not the job of political parties to dictate to Tasmanians what form of government they must choose; it's the voters' choice who they want as their parliamentary representatives.

Once chosen, it's the job of all those elected to make that work in the best interests of the community.

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Working hard for Kingborough

The key issues I'm hearing are **health, traffic and jobs.**

With your number one vote, I will be a strong, local voice on these critical issues.

