

Participant Story: Renee Farhart

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Written with Cherish Page-Brooks

I have been working with Renee Farhart since 2016. Renee is a young woman with a passion for life that is infectious. She is blind, deaf with an intellectual disability and is cared for by her family, primarily her mother, Adele. Before reaching out to us at Jeder, Adele had been doing all she could, including writing to politicians, to get Renee onto the NDIS. We met at a pre-planning workshop funded by ADHC. I was able to help and support Adele and Renee to finally get a plan. When we were first working together, Renee was attending a day program 5 days per week, we learned she was being neglected by staff and abused by other participants. It was decided to immediately move her and change service providers.

Throughout the next few years, we tried different day services while in the evenings Renee lived in the family home. Adele continued to get some much needed help for her own mental health, as their journey had been exhausting. We supported Renee to get funding in order to help her move into a home of her own. An apartment was trialled, with 24/7 support, but ultimately the family felt Renee was better off and safer to be closer to home. Renee's high sensitivity to sound and movement makes it difficult for her to live with others. Never to be deterred, we continued to think outside the box and how we could best support the family and Renee to have a great life.

Moving forward to today, through all the trials and try-outs, Renee is living a great life. Renee is now engaged in her daily activities such as washing, cooking and laundry; she is doing arts and crafts every day and getting out into community; she began exercising with an exercise physiologist and has since lost weight; and she is using a communication board as well as different apps that help her communicate with her team. She recently attended her brother's wedding.

Renee lives in a granny flat at the back of the family home with 24/7 support, provided by an excellent, collaborative provider – Manaia Assist. We all work together – the family, the providers, the therapists – and daily share the activities Renee participates in via WhatsApp. One of our own BIS practitioners, Aleks Jovanovic, delivers staff training every month, collaborating with the team on learning the best support strategies that suit Renee. Mum has been able to go back to work, knowing that Renee has a whole team in her corner that support and know her well. Because of her growth, the support of her team and Adele's perseverance, Renee is living her best life and her future is only brighter from here.