

Joshua's Story

This is the story of Joshua's journey in a self-managed program as told by Joshua and his parents Rick and Kerrie.

Joshua

I am 21 years old. I love anything to do with Playstation and X-Box. I am an uncle to the two cutest boys in the world. I live with my very large extended family and enjoy my life.

I completed my School Certificate in 2005 and then completed two years of Transition to Work and one Year of Community Participation with [Lifestyle Solutions](#) in Newcastle. In 2008, I was employed part time for six months by Compassion Australia, and I have participated in a number of activities facilitated by the Hunter Peer Support Group.

Rick and Kerrie

As Joshua's parents, we assessed towards the end of 2008 that Joshua had plateaued in both his skill development and social interactions. Despite having successfully managed the part-time job for 6 months, he really wasn't learning the skills needed to live independently and his circle of friends was limited totally to other clients in the program.

Discovery of the option for a Self-Managed Program during a community forum opened up a new pathway for Joshua that has produced remarkable results.

Joshua

I think [Ability Options](#) is great. It has improved my quality of life a lot. I used to be bored and unmotivated, now I feel happy and challenged to learn new things. I like the chance to have more life experiences and meet new people.

Rick and Kerrie

Being able to manage Joshua's funding and the support of Ability Options has empowered us to develop a unique program that met Joshua's initial needs and gave the flexibility to adjust that program as his needs changed.

High priority goals during the early stages included the development of a fitness program at the local gym, travel training, budget management and general housekeeping skills.

A TAFE course in food preparation, joining a bowling league, and youth group activities kept him busy and provided opportunities for broadening his social interaction. Joshua hired a university student to assist him in some of these activities, and Kate proved to be very good at finding new activities that would expand Joshua's world.

Joshua

Kate was great. She taught me how to handle money and encouraged me to fulfill my dream to get my driver's license. She also introduced me to her friends. I liked going to the gym and it feels really good to be fit and healthy again, and girls think I am more handsome. Kate found heaps of things for me to do like swim squad and book club. She was like a sister to me and didn't let me get away with being lazy.

Rick and Kerrie

12 months on, Joshua had achieved quite a number of goals in his program.

He is now fully independent on the public transport system in Newcastle, manages his own finances (which include paying his rent, mobile phone, Compassion child sponsorship, purchasing clothes, paying for outings etc.), and is able to successfully use online banking to manage his finances and savings. However, Joshua still has little concept of value and unless he is guided in his purchases and in understanding the value of things, he can quickly blow his budget.

He can (with some assistance) prepare a meal for the family. He does his own washing, has significantly improved his fitness levels and now participates in Taekwondo training, came second in a bowling league tournament, joined (and participates in) a movie/book club that meets once a month, independently undertakes volunteer work at Compassion Australia and participates in young adult activities at his Church. Now, if we could only get him to keep his room clean!

Joshua

I, like most 21 year old boys, reserve the right to live in a pig-sty, but that is not the matter at hand. I like having a busy schedule but I get really tired sometimes because of my sleep apnea, which I would like to get sorted out.

I feel like I'm learning a lot and my self-esteem is a lot higher because I am more independent. I'm starting to get invited other places with friends from youth group, and going to one of my friends bucks' weekend and wedding has been a highlight of my year.

Rick and Kerrie

Josh told us in the car that going to this event was the first time that he felt like a normal teenager and he was so excited. We are really endeavoring to see more of this sort of thing happen, but like all relationships they take time to develop.

The latest event in Joshua's life is his new part-time job delivering flowers for a local Newcastle florist. Each Monday and Friday Joshua rocks up to the florist shop with his assistant and plans out the day's deliveries.

After loading the van, Joshua and Ian hit the streets delivering to businesses, hospitals and homes. Effective route management is critical to minimise the delivery time, so a GPS is used to plan out the routes.

While the job itself is unpaid, the self-managed program allows Joshua to employ a driver (who drives the van and assists him with the route management skills), and to learn the necessary skills at holding down a responsible job in the community.

The florist shop benefits, Joshua benefits—a win/win situation for all concerned. Early feedback shows that Joshua is doing a fantastic job and is developing a good rapport with clients.

Joshua

I like doing personal deliveries more than corporate deliveries because people are always so happy to see me. I like their smiling faces. The girls in the florist shop are really nice to me and I am also getting to know people in the surrounding shops. I feel happy and satisfied with the work I'm doing.

Rick and Kerrie

One of the things that most concerned us when Josh was attending a day program was the fact that he felt that the government “owed him” and it was not necessary for him to exert himself to make a living or learn new skills.

This attitude sort of snuck up on us and was quite a shock. It really has taken the last 12 months to re-establish in Josh the concept that he can be an active, contributing member of society.

So what is next for Josh? His goals are continually being revised and his horizons expanded. He is quite keen to obtain his driver's license and has done a lot of work towards meeting the initial Learners requirements.

He is also keen to take an overseas trip towards the end of the year. We are in contact with an organisation that will allow Josh to participate in a training program.

The program incorporates personal development, performing arts and the opportunity to volunteer in a variety of situations, such as working with homeless kids, orphanages and schools. We feel that this will allow Josh a concentrated time to really develop his personal and social skills in a very safe environment.

In reality there are still quite a few steps to take in making the transition from being supported in his activities to being able to live independently, but Josh is well on the way. We all feel much more confident that this goal can be achieved.

The self-managed journey so far, has been interesting and has produced some great outcomes. It has not been as easy as we first felt and we have experienced quite a bit of frustration with public perception of Josh and his abilities, and finding suitable people to work with him. We have also found it difficult to establish a circle of support, but are continuing our endeavors in this area.

Self-managed funding has given us the power to develop a very personalised action plan for Joshua's future.

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