

# A bike through the NDIS: Luke's story

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## A Freedom Wheels bike for Luke - funded through his NDIS plan.

### A bike that ticks all the boxes



***“I took Luke to many bike shops and he wouldn’t even get on one until we tried a Freedom Wheels bike, which he took to immediately. His face lit up and I knew this bike was the right fit.”***

Sharon, Luke’s mum, had a checklist of requirements to be met before Luke could join the family on the local bike tracks. “Luke has Autism Spectrum Disorder and low muscle tone, and we needed a bike that would feel comfortable, have outrigger wheels, a frame that would enable him to get on and off easily, a bike that supported his back and sat him upright to ride, as opposed to hunched over, with dual hand and foot brakes. With this in mind it was impossible to tick off my checklist until I heard about Freedom Wheels bikes.”

The Freedom Wheels modified bike service, a program run by Solve Disability Solutions, custom builds bikes to meet the highly individual needs of people living with disability. The skilled team of Freedom Wheels therapists, engineers and volunteers modify standard bikes using a range of specially designed support components, which are made to be detachable so that bikes can be easily stored and transported on standard bike racks.

After hearing about the Freedom Wheels program from others, Sharon rang Solve to register her interest in the program. A Freedom Wheels therapist rang her back to explain the process.

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"We spoke in depth about Luke, what his needs were and what Freedom Wheels could offer him," says Sharon.

## Luke is assessed for a Freedom Wheels bike

An appointment was made for Luke at one of the Freedom Wheels assessment clinics held regularly at Solve's central office in Melbourne. As part of the program, each rider requires an individual assessment to identify the bike, components and modifications required for their age, height, weight, type of disability and physical and cognitive abilities. The assessment process is carried out by a Solve Disability Solutions Occupational Therapist, supported by Solve technical volunteers.



"At the clinic we were welcomed and shown a few different types of bikes," says Sharon. "We met the Solve Occupational Therapist and staff who guided us to pick the right bike. Luke was given instructions on how to ride and the therapist was by his side giving encouragement and seeing how Luke responded to the bike. Being indoors also made it an enjoyable experience as we didn't have to tackle uneven ground, roads, excess noise or traffic. Luke could comfortably and quietly enjoy his first ride experience. I felt confident that we had made the right decision."

## Navigating the NDIS

As the NDIS was being phased into Luke's area, the family decided to fund his Freedom Wheels bike under his NDIS plan. In accordance with NDIS guidelines, Solve organised for a Service Agreement to be drawn up and co-signed by Sharon. "Our decision to obtain a bike

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was in the pre-planning stage of our NDIS plan,” Sharon explains. “I decided in Luke’s initial plan that a bike would greatly benefit him. One of Luke’s primary goals is to engage in more social activities independent from the family whilst increasing community access opportunities. A long term goal of his is to have choices and more control over his life.”

“The bike was budgeted for under Assistive Technology as a stated item, where a quote and assessment is required. It specifically relates to increasing community access, improved daily living skills and increasing independence,” Sharon explains further. “The Occupational Therapy provided under the Freedom Wheels program was also funded under Luke’s plan. This was all part of the overall planning towards Luke’s goals.”

Sharon navigated her own way through the NDIS planning process with the help of Luke’s case manager at Health Ability. This involved talking to the NDIS, Luke’s occupational therapist, and Solve. Luke’s Occupational Therapist submitted the required NDIS reports and assessments, then it was just a matter of waiting. “There was quite a delay in getting plan approval as the NDIS have many applications to process and basically we just had to get in line,” says Sharon.



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By the time the plan was approved, the Freedom Wheels quote was out of date. A new quote was drawn up by Solve and sent to Sharon, who forwarded it onto SWEP for approval. It took another 3 months before the quote was approved, but as soon as it was received a bike collection date was booked and the Freedom Wheels volunteers began building Luke's bike.

## Bike collection day

"At the bike pick-up we were met by staff who thoroughly explained how to assemble and disassemble the bike for travel or storage, what gear we should transport the bike on, and the tyre pressure required," says Sharon. "We tested all the components and were also given an instruction manual on the day."

"Luke took to his new bike straight away. He can operate the bike safely and I feel confident he will achieve riding without the outriggers in the near future," explains Sharon.

Luke's Freedom Wheels bike fits into Sharon and her family's long term vision for Luke. "I want Luke to learn to ride as his Dad is a keen bike rider and this is an activity they can share together. There are many bike tracks in Melbourne and around our suburb to be enjoyed. Riding a bike will improve his balance, muscle tone and social participation skills. I also feel Luke might struggle in the future to obtain a driver's licence so this, and public transport, may be his only mode of transport."

Sharon's advice for others about to go through the NDIS planning process is to be clear on your goals and how you can achieve them in your NDIS plan. Have an Occupational Therapist who will support your goal of obtaining a bike - and be patient. "I wouldn't have done anything differently as I have great support and I understood the process involved. The Freedom Wheels service was impeccable. I was given information along the way regarding the process and staff were professional and courteous. Was it worth the wait? Yes, well worth the wait."

**For detailed information about how to include Solve's Assistive Technology or Freedom Wheels bicycles into your NDIS plan and obtain funding approval by the NDIA planners, download our**

**[Information pack for people living with a disability, their parents, carers, advocates, clinicians and NDIS service providers.](#)**

**For any other help, support or advice regarding your plan, please  
call Solve on 1300 663 243**