

## “HOUSESITTING FOR JUDY”

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I want to talk about being at Judy's house. She was going away for six weeks and I agreed to housesit for her. She lives at Nudgee which is close to my family home. I loved it there. I loved to be on my own with other people coming and going all the time. It was so much fun.

The highlight was being on my own, like a real adult for once not a child at home with his parents.

I found sleeping in a strange bed hard. I like my own bed better.

It was also hard to get used to not having Mum and Pa around all the time.

I think it worked out very well so I guess the planning paid off in the end. I want to tell you about all the friends and family who came to see me. A lot of people came to see me and it was great fun. I love having visitors and I had lots. I sent everyone a letter telling them what I was going to do and asking them to be part of my adventure. Margaret organised times with my family and friends and they all came. It made the stay very special for me.

My sister Emily who lives in Melbourne enjoyed ringing me at Judy's as there were often people there who could type and so she could have more phone conversations with me.

We talked about Mum and Pa going away to New Zealand for a holiday and how we hoped they would have a good time and that I would have a good time on my own. I think she was as excited as I was. I asked Emily - "Why didn't you tell me it was so much fun living away from home?" - Em said I didn't know if you would like it or not so I didn't say too much to you so I wouldn't get your hopes up too high.

I had 20 visitors in the six weeks and some came more than once.

The youngest was my nephew Jack who is 2. He came with his brother William and his parents and we watched a DVD and had Pizza.

The oldest, in her 70s came a few times and gave me a massage. She massaged my legs and my back. It was hurting a bit so the massage was good for it.

I went out to see people as well. I didn't just stay home but went out quite a bit too. I think it is good to have a balance.

I went with friends to walk their dogs one day and that was fun. I went to visit their friends as well - they welcomed us and gave us food and drink. I often had visitors of an evening to cook and share a meal with me. I told them what to cook and they did. I told them to cook lots of things I like and they did it. It was pretty good being in charge of the cooking even if I didn't do a lot of it I helped them. I made them do what I liked not what they liked. It was good to have the power. I let them know by typing it out when there were people there who could type with me ..and having someone write it down for the others as not all of them can type yet.

I had some quiet time but not a lot.

It was just all so exciting for me but I was tired at night and I slept well most nights. It was so much fun I was having the time of my life. My brother Patrick stayed with me four nights a week and Mum or Dad one night and then my support workers slept over two nights.

Penny organised paid support workers to help me with my personal care and to help me with things when family and friends couldn't be there. I am used to other people bathing me and taking me to the toilet so it wasn't a big problem for me. I can let people do this for me if I have to. I liked the men better. I was a bit nervous of the new girls at first but they were nice and I got used to it. I liked them because they were friendly to me and helped me but were still a lot of fun to be with. They'd tell jokes, have a bit of a laugh; listen to music; tell me funny things they had done or seen which was interesting for me. It was different from my everyday life.

I think I can say in front of mum without her getting too upset I didn't go out with any girls or get drunk but I would have if I got the chance, but I didn't so that's that. I will try to do that next time if I get the chance. I would love to go out with a girl if I meet a pretty one.

I like it at home too.

### What led up to this ?

I think it was because I had wanted to try being on my own for a long time and this was finally my chance to try it. I thought I should grab it with both hands and run with it. I thought I might not get another chance like this for a long time so I wanted to go for it.

I have been thinking about having my own life for a couple of years now. I started thinking about it when Marg used to have meetings with Mum and Lyn and Penny and Kerrie at the coffee shop.

I gave my input as much as I could but I didn't really get my own voice heard until I started typing using letterboards.

I had a moment of thoughtful reflection and realised that my life wasn't going in any real direction. It was just the same day in, day out. It was boring. It was not me. I thought if I could tell the people around me what was important to me I could have a life better than that. A starting point for me was the idea that if I was a real man I would catch the bus to work - and now I do it every week by myself,

Then I realised what I was doing at the service that organised my post school services didn't meet my need. I talked this through with the people I meet with – “My special people” and we decided I need to be doing something different. I now direct my support. I go to the gym for fitness. I email my family and friends. I organise mens nights. I play golf sometimes. I have done voluntary work and creative writing. I feel like I have control of my life, for the first time. We had talked about me moving into my own place. I didn't think I could achieve this but since my stay at Judys I think anything is possible.

The network of family and friends – ‘my special people’ is the thing that will make my life work. The past two years Marg has worked with me and my family to bring together a network of people who know me and can support me to live the life I choose. For the past four years I have been doing voluntary office work at a Disability Services Queensland office – this has meant I have made friends that are very important in my life. They have become part of my network of people and many of them spent time with me at Judy's place.

It has been heart warming to see what can happen if you ask people to be in your life.

While my friends and family love to hear what I have to say they can not all type with me so communication can be a little difficult when I spend time with them. I intend to teach them all to type with me if they are willing. We started this by holding a workshop where 25 of my family and friends came to find out more about FC and my communication system of typing.

I wanted to talk about mens stuff without mum and other women around, so I invited some men to get together. We had pizza and talked about

stuff I wouldn't usually have the opportunity to talk about at home. I'm having another one soon.

### Where to from here ?

I think the sky is the limit. I believe I have the potential to do whatever I decide I want in my life. I will be in my own place one day. I know that my independence is my first priority in all that I do and all that I want to achieve in my life.

I will have my own place.

I will have a flatmate or girlfriend living with me.

I will have a dog

I will have a job

I will have friends over for parties and fun times.

I will have a life.

That's all folks !!!!