

A photograph of an older man, Fred, sitting in the driver's seat of a car. He is wearing a purple plaid shirt, a seatbelt, and a purple headband with a small yellow tag. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background shows a blurred view of a residential street.

Fred's story

Fred's heart warming transition story

Fred's journey started in November 2023. I was tapped on the shoulder by Client Engagement Lead, Julia Wilson, "I have met a gentleman named Fred from Hamilton Hostel in Macquarie Hospital," she said. "I think he would be a good fit for Macquarie Parkside."

The Hamilton Hostel is a residential complex within Macquarie Hospital that offers long-stay and extended care for people who have complex physical and mental health needs. These units are self-contained, meaning residents have very limited ability to go out into the community.

This is where I first met Fred. He was eager to share his love of music, Pavarotti and Elvis being his favourites. This was also when I learned that he had been living in Hamilton Hostel since 2011. That's 13 years!

Leaving the hospital that day, I was thrilled at the chance to make a difference in Fred's life. When I shared the news with the team, they felt a mix of excitement and nervousness, as is common when welcoming someone new into our homes.

Fred is 63 and has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, epilepsy and has an Intellectual Disability. It takes the assistance of two people and a walking belt for him to move from place to place. He comes from a large family with five brothers and two sisters and loves them dearly.

He often talks about them, and always looks forward to their visits.

Transitioning to a new environment is always difficult so we started with three hours a day over the weekend in a popular nearby coffee shop called Tilt. This allowed Fred to slowly get to know us in a neutral and relaxed environment. It helped that his two favourite things were on the agenda – coffee and banana bread.

In January 2024, COVID hit the Hostel, causing us to pause services for just over a week. Once it was safe to do so, we took Fred to explore new places for longer periods - new coffee shops, morning tea at the wharf, and to have his favourite fish and chips. Fred, who had spent 13 years in closed confines, embraced this change with enthusiasm. Apart from witnessing Fred's joy at every discovery, I am especially proud of the warm and genuine rapport the team built with Fred.

In February 2024, a decision was made to welcome Fred into our care. We engaged in discussions with his family, particularly Jon, his brother and guardian, and also reached out to his sister Caroline. Both Jon and Caroline played active roles in Fred's transition process. We made sure to communicate clearly, openly laying out expectations.

We hosted a morning tea at the B1 house where Jon and Caroline toured Fred's new home, saw his room and met his housemates. They were impressed with what they saw and eagerly participated in planning the next steps. Fred officially transitioned to Macquarie on 25 March and it's safe to say that he's enjoying life.

During morning visits, Fred would occasionally ask, "do I have to go back [to Hamilton Hostel]?". When asked if he wanted to, he would say, "not really ey, everyone's nice and I like it here". I would then say, "well, you don't have to go anywhere mate. If this is where you want to stay, by all means you can stay."

So far, Fred's transitional journey has had its ups and downs. We faced challenges that tested the team's flexibility and resilience, and we adapted when needed. On days Fred wanted to stay in, we kept it simple with coffee, banana bread, and chats about music and his interests. We were always mindful of Fred's choices and adjusted plans accordingly.

Despite funding limitations, we strive to provide the support Fred requires, considering his occupational therapists' recommendations. Over the next year, we aim to advocate for better funding to meet all of Fred's support needs.

Fred came to us from Hamilton Hostel with only the clothes on his back. Working with his family, we helped him get new clothes, furniture, grooming items, and personal belongings, marking a fresh start he truly deserved. It was great to hear Jon's heartfelt comment about seeing Fred's demeanour change since we started supporting him in November.



When asked why I chose disability services during my interview for the Service Manager role, I said I wanted to be a small piece of the puzzle in contributing to others' successes. Success stories like Fred's wouldn't be possible without the hard work and dedication of our team. I am extremely thankful for their dedication and shared values in supporting Fred through this journey.

Achieve Australia is a for-purpose community organisation that has been providing accommodation and services to people with disability since 1952.

We champion social inclusion, focusing on the individual needs and lives of the people we support



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