

My Home, My Way: Podcast Transcript. Episode 6 – Renting My Own Home

Jake Briggs: For us people with disability, living in our own home isn't something we expect to just happen...

Rachel High: Something that's mine, something that's independent.

Jake Briggs: Often, we have to make it happen - by ourselves, or with our family and our allies.

Rachel High: My parents actually plan to get this apartment.

Jake Briggs: I'm Jake Briggs and welcome to My Home, My way. A podcast about people with disability making their home, their own.

Living in a group home is often given as the only option for people with a disability - but that's not true. It's not what's always best for us. Group home living isn't the typical way we make a home. We don't say, hey, I'd like to live with five strangers with the same diagnosis as me, that someone else chose and have our home run by a service! So what's the alternative? My Home My Way has practical advice and stories of people with developmental disability, their allies and family making a home on their terms, with support models that enable, even people with complex needs, to live in their own home.

By the way, this podcast is sensory friendly with a sensitive use of music so you can listen comfortably.

This episode is about having your own home by renting. Over 30% of Australians rent their home or flat. And of course, that includes people with disability.

In this episode of My Home My Way, you'll meet Rachel and her mum, Miriam, and find out...

How do you rent your own place?

What can renting look like?

How can family members and allies support people with disability to rent?

This episode won't cover renting in a share house. Check out the My Home My Way website for stories and advice on share housing.

When you walk through Rachel's front door, the first thing you notice are a bunch of photos of Rachel with some pretty famous faces.

Rachel High: Yeah, this wall is a wall of fame. These are all the celebrities I've met in my life. Jennifer Saunders, I've always loved her work. Ian Mckellen, sometimes I refer to him as Gandalf. Bernadette Peters is one of my favorite singers, a whole range

Jake Briggs: Rachel is a stage actor and she's just finished a Bachelor of Arts.

Rachel High: I'll be graduating in the Bonython Hall in my mortarboard and gown from Flinders University.

Jake Briggs: And this is Miriam, Rachel's Mum.

Miriam High: My name is Miriam High. I am 88.

Jake Briggs: Rachel and her mum are close.

Rachel High: Ok, my mother is insightful. My mother, she's very motherly and like that in her, you know, she teaches me a lot. I like to learn things from her. Like for example, the Sea Ranger days. She teaches me sometimes to row, sometimes to.. not only to swim cos I know. But she did teach me to swim when I was younger.

She's there for me, that's the main thing about my mum.

Miriam High: She's always wanted to do things and she's always looked forward to doing things. So we have had to open doors for her or allow her, or enable her to open doors so that she can have that new experience. You know, if she say, if I'm interested in sailing, then give it a try.

Her life has never been... never, ever been without anything to do. That's happened in her theater world and it's happened in her education world.

I mean, she's had this lovely journey where she's experienced lots of things, lots of people, lots of places. She's traveled quite a lot. And so she's absorbed a lot of things, which makes her very good company.

Jake Briggs: And while Rachel and her mum have a close relationship, they're close in another way too - they're neighbours!

Rachel High: My parents live next door. I'm number four. They're number three. Well, it's uh, an apartment block. The inside is, have a bathroom, bedroom, study area and kitchen, really.

I have some fish here, yes, those are my pets. It's good because it has good space and it's good to do whatever you want in your own space. That's what I like. Also to be independent in it as well.

I can go to the library by myself. You know, I can go anywhere in the town by myself. Sometimes I like going into the city, just to have a wander and do that kind of thing. And where I work now is close to where I live, about 10 minutes away. That's what I like about it.

I do feel connected to the community because. I've been making such great friends here. I have a lady next door. That's about two doors away from me that I go to to do my ancestry. So my ancestry work, and that's a hobby.

Jake Briggs: Before Rachel rented, she lived with her parents.

Rachel High: I was keen to move out because I was living next door. So basically, I was living in this study/ bedroom. I found it a bit too small to actually be a living arrangement.

Miriam High: We moved from Port Augusta. And Rachel lived here with us and we decided it was time for her really to find a place of her own.

Rachel High: I was saying, I want a bigger place. Something that said that's mine, something that's independent. So I was telling them that. And they wanted me to have that too. So we agreed to that. We did have some planning and discussions with it.

Well, I'm not a big planner. I can't plan, but my parents helped me to do that, as in a bigger picture. So, we just discussed it really before planning. That's the way we work.

Miriam: So we did a lot of searching, there were lots of things offered to us. Housing trusts. A long way away. Too far for us. You know, because she's going out on her own for the first time. So we were really very cautious about that.

And although she's quite capable, there needs to be a 24 hour link, because of being frightened of things or being sick or whatever.

Eventually there was a house that was set up, a shared house. They have four or five people in the house. And we went to have a look at this and there was a room at the back that Rachel could have had.

So we said, yeah, that looks good. And came home. And this lady next door said, look, I'm moving out. Would you like to have this unit? And so we gave Rachel the choice. Do you want to go and live that house with all those people? They're nice people, or do you want to live next door on your own?

So she chose next door.

Rachel High: Yeah, so this apartment became available. My parents actually did all that themselves to discuss and to plan the two to get this, get this is number four apartment.

Miriam: And in a way that was really a great relief for us because we could help her grow into that situation.

Jake Briggs: Before Rachel rented, she lived with her parents.

Rachel has a periodic lease in her own name, and her parents aren't guarantors.

Because the landlord had known Rachel from when she was living with her parents, her rental application didn't need a rental history or a character reference. Usually a rental application does.

For the last 13 years, Rachel dealt directly with the landlord. For the past two years, the lease has been handled through a real estate agent.

Any major issues with the unit are still discussed with the landlord, Rachel and her parents.

Jake Briggs: Rachel had some safety issues with the bathroom. Her occupational therapist recommended some adjustments and they got installed with Rachel's NDIS funding, with the landlord's cooperation.

Rachel moving out of home was both exciting and challenging.

Rachel High: Well, it's by yourself, one, and that is the greatest challenge ever. So sometimes it can be nerve wracking. Some people might think it's easy, but it's not when it comes to the first time.

Miriam High: I suppose the first few years, I was in there quite a lot. And then slowly we began to get workers who worked with her. And as the time went by, I didn't do this and I didn't do that and I didn't do it. I didn't go in and do the washing. I didn't go in and do her cleaning. One by one we were able to hand it over to a worker.

Jake Briggs: It's been 15 years since Rachel moved out. Now she manages these responsibilities herself with support.

Rachel High: I'm a visual learner. I respond to pictures. Executive function. So this sign tells me to wash up. Well, washing up is a major bit. I understand that bit. Making sure my house is all in check, make sure it's safe.

I do have a support system with it, I have someone to come in to help me deal with the cleaning.

So, you know, like every Monday. Wednesdays and Fridays. We do it together, it's fun.

Miriam High: Now we have arranged that she has frozen meals brought in and so she can cook her own meal every night, and she can get her own breakfast. So she just comes in here for lunch.

Rachel High: I like to be independent with my foods for a bit now. I have dinners I can actually make myself in the microwave, which is easy for me. We ordered them online. So yeah, it depends what my taste buds want.

I have here, chicken casserole, tuna mornay, roast beef.

Jake Briggs: Rachel and her parents have a weekly film night where they eat dinner together and she also pops in for lunch on a regular basis. And even though they are neighbours, Miriam is determined not to be the nosy kind.

Rachel High: There's no boundaries for that. We can see, we can see each other whenever we like, so they can come into my house, I can come into their house, now and again.

Miriam High: If she wants to have some, I mean, I never go into her house when she has a visitor, you know, because, well, I say I never would, I would, if I was invited, but if she has a friend there, well then that's it, she's has friend.

Rachel High: Now the thing is with this, I happened to be out, I've come or come out as gay. So I don't know yet who I'll meet in the future. I do have an interest in someone, but I'm not saying their name. We're just thinking of spending some time together and see where it goes.

Miriam High: And if she has a personal friend, she's an adult and it's not my affair. She's got that privacy really. It's just the safety bit. I think like you would with anybody really, you know, if you saw somebody who was taking advantage of them, you would do something about that.

Jake Briggs: As anybody who rents in Australia knows, there is always uncertainty about the future. Will property owner increase the rent, not renew the lease or sell the property?

Miriam: That is an issue. The man who owns the unit let it to her about 15 years ago. At the moment he is saying it is secure. But we of course are always aware that in two weeks time she could be out of a house.

Were that to happen, then we would immediately bring her here. And put all her stuff in storage. And look for a place nearby. We would go to people across the road that have got units. But we would try to get one that was within reach of us, so that we could still be that support person.

The day comes when we're not here, that's a whole different issue.

Jake Briggs: Rachel is close with her parents, and they help her out a lot, but she is aware they won't be around forever. Being well connected to community and friends is an important safeguard.

Rachel High: Yeah, that's a difficult one, but I'd rather not think about it at the moment. The D word kind of scares me. They're choosing to use another word called 'go'. I'd rather not think about it at the moment because it's too early for me at 44.

When it does come to it, I would have some support through here. Because I got some friends here and they would all support me through it. And all the friends and the family that I've grown to know and love.

Miriam High: It is the thing that worries us more than anything else. You know, I'm 88 and John is 81. And it can't go on much longer. And so you have to think that, you know, maybe in five years' time, something needs to be done about this.

And if the day comes, when we're not here, then this is her secure home and this is not rented.

So it would be her secure home. So as far as having a place to live after we go, that's not an issue. But supporting her after we go, might be.

It is one of the biggest issues, really one of the biggest issues because all through her life, there have been people who have been who have come to us and said, don't worry about Rachel, if anything happens to you I'll look after her. And there's only John and I, she hasn't got brothers or sisters. So she'd be on her own.

And these people have committed themselves to looking after Rachael. However, lives change, things happen to people's lives. They go abroad, they change their family structure. situations are difficult for them. And they peel off. And that's not their fault.

At the moment there is a lady in Townsville, who knows Rachel has known her for a very long time.

And she is the last resort, if you like. So if all else fails for Rachel in Adelaide, she will take Rachel to Townsville. She will ensure she is housed and supported, but we would like her to stay here because Adelaide is the place she knows. She's quite happy going to Queensland, or Townsville. So there is that security for Rachel about that. But I think that she would be lost if she was suddenly in a new place. So she would need a lot of support once she got there.

Jake Briggs: And if you want to know more about safeguards, listen to our last episode - episode 8.

Miriam High: We're also exploring what they call a Microboard. That is a more formal group than the circle of friends.

Rachel has a Circle of Friends. And those people I'm sure would step in, but not for the long-term future.

They would just step in to make sure she was alright, for the time being. But this Microboard seems to be a different system. It's a more formal system, and it's legal. And you have people on the Microboard, who would take on that responsibility. And that's not been set up in South Australia yet. But we're looking into it. So you'd have somebody on there who was legally responsible for Rachel's future.

Jake Briggs: If she had it all to do over again, Miriam isn't sure what she'd do differently.

Miriam High: Maybe, if I'd put her in a home... The quandary is, if I had allowed her, or if I had to organise her that she went to live somewhere else, the risk of that was cutting off the enrichment for her life. Because the enrichment for her life came about me being her life planner.

So it was me supporting her, or both of us, supporting her to have experience after experience after experience. If she had gone somewhere else, who would have done that? Who would have maintained her theatre work? It takes hours and hours to support

somebody in the theatre. It takes hours to support somebody going through uni. It takes a lot of input to, to use the word again, to enrich somebody's life.

Jake Briggs: And Rachel has some advice for moving out of home for the first time.

Rachel High: I'll say, take it slowly at first, before we make a decision and talk to your parents and develop a support system there and see how that would work out.

I think it's important that if they were guided to have their own place - from their parents, but also from the outside world of people that know them. So I think that'd be so much easier. So would be my thoughts and my advice.

Jake Briggs: That was Rachel High and her mum Miriam High, sharing their story of how Rachel rents an apartment.

Having your own place, close to family, friends and the community you know well is important.

Having good supports help you live your best possible life.

Making backup plans like a Circle of Support or a Microboard can be a safeguard to stay living in your own place.

In episode 7, you'll get tips and advice on buying your own place, from someone who's done it.

Catherine: I'm glad that I actually did it. Because I felt like I'm one of the ones who has not got a disability, but I have.

Jake Briggs: You can find the Show Notes for this episode, with the main points, and a transcript on the My Home My Way website.

The My Home My Way website also has lots of resources, stories and tips for you to get your own place on your terms, or to support someone else to.

Type My Home My Way into a search engine, or go to www.myhomemyway.com.au

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We'd love to know if there's anything we could do to make this podcast more accessible, and your feedback in general. Contact us through the My Home My Way website.

Thanks for listening.