**00:00 Carers Queensland announcement:** You've heard of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, but how much do you know about it? Find out what it means, how it works and how to apply for access at Carers Queensland's free workshop, Understanding the NDIS. Find out more, check for events coming up near you and book your spot online at carersqld.com.au. You can also call us on 1300 999 636.

**00:27 Voiceover:** Choice and Control: a podcast celebrating people with disability, brought to you by Carers Queensland, NDIS Local Area Coordination Partner in the Community.

Daniel Clark and his brother William are Queensland's Young Australians of the Year for 2021. They're passionate about protecting Borneo’s endangered orangutans. They've raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for conservation and habitat protection, and have spoken to thousands of school children to raise awareness. 24 year old Daniel has cerebral palsy. He's completed a university degree and is now balancing sport, volunteering, and his conservation work, which was inspired by another nature, loving Queenslander and an Aussie legend.

**1:15 Daniel Clarke:** Well, really, I used to love watching Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter, and I was so inspired by his impact on conservation. The documentary on orangutans that he did really spoke to me. And then when he passed away in 2006, I was really upset like most of the world way. I turned to my parents and I said “Who is going to save the orangutans now that Steve Irwin is gone?” And then I thought “Why can’t I do it?” And then it all just snowballed from there, we started raising money at our local school, my brother William came on board and we’ve gone from strength to strength.

**02:18 Fiona Stutz:** And you were only quite young when that happened, weren’t you? You were only eight or 10?

**02:26 Daniel:** Yes, I was only ten back then, and my Dad was like “Are you sure you want to do this? Don’t you want to do something else, like go over to America, go over to Disneyland?” And I said “No, no, I really want to save the orangutans.” And my parents were so supportive of this dream that I had.

**02:53 Fiona:** And on the back of this you, and your brother as you were saying, established Tears in the Jungle. Tell me a little bit more about that.

**03:03 Daniel:** Tears in the Jungle is a book my brother and I wrote on our first trip to Borneo. We were lucky enough to go to Borneo to see the orangutans in the wild. When we came back from that trip we wanted to let other people know about the orangutans and what it’s like to be in Borneo. We realised not many people would have the opportunity to travel over there. Writing the book, we realised it could be a really good educational tool and it all went from there.

Our book was so successful we decided to go back to Borneo six years later in 2014 to see what had changed in Borneo and where the money people had donated had gone towards. And we wanted to document that in our second book, Fight for Survival, to let people know their help has made a huge difference in Borneo and towards the care of orangutans.

04:32 Fiona: That's amazing, because this important work you're doing has also seen you and your brother visiting schools, educating students around the country, as well as your literary work on orangutan conservation has been incorporated into the New South Wales Department of Education curriculum. So why is it important to inspire young people to make a positive difference?

**04:52 Daniel:** It’s our young people who are the next generation who will ultimately inherit the world that we live in. And we want to encourage and inspire them to become just as passionate about the orangutans and indeed the global environment as we are. Because the problems that are facing our climate are only going to get worse in the years to come if we don’t act now. And want to encourage as many people are we can to really do their part and help our global environment.

**05:43 Fiona:** So as I was saying before, you’ve raised more than $950,000, what else does that money go toward?

**05:50 Daniel:** Primarily that money goes towards protecting the rainforest. We donate the money to the Orangutan Project, they have a program called Save the Forest. We donate money to that program, and what that does is hire local rangers to patrol the national park around Borneo and Indonesia, so that illegal loggers and palm oil companies don’t encroach into the land of the national park.

The money also goes to care centres and improving the technology in the care centres, making sure they have the proper medical equipment, and making sure all the orphaned orangutans have the best chance of being rehabilitated back into the wild.

**07:01 Fiona:** Sounds like it's really going to good use, that money, which is fantastic. And with this work that you're doing, you're now Queensland's Young Australian of the Year for 2021. Congratulations! How does it feel to be awarded and recognised for this?

**07:19 Daniel:** It’s absolutely amazing. William and I definitely weren’t expecting this accolade. Because we love what we do so much, we just do it because we’re passionate about it. Along the way we never expected to be recognised for what we’re doing. We’re just really happy that we’re making a difference. But to be awarded the 2021 Queensland Young Australian of the Year, it gives us the platform to raise even more awareness and bring the orangutans more into the mainstream conversation in our society. And also doing it with my brother is amazing, he is an awesome, awesome brother and I wouldn’t think of doing it with without him.

**08:24 Fiona**: It's great you have that good relationship with him and you can do something you both love doing it together. Daniel, you have cerebral palsy, and when you're out visiting the schools, which we have we touched on before, you use National Disability Insurance Scheme supports including a support worker to help you with transportation to and from the venues, getting on and off the stage when you're presenting, and some personal care. Why is it important for you to have this type of support?

**08:54 Daniel:** As you mentioned, I have cerebral palsy. I’ve had CP since birth. And in my case, CP is only a physical disability. I use a manual wheelchair for mobility. Having a support worker with me at these events makes a huge difference. It means that I can be a lot more independent than I otherwise would be. It also means because I now have the choice of support workers and when I need support workers, it means William and I can go out and talk to a lot more schools than we otherwise would be able to simply because I would have no-one to help me. We haven’t been able to do any school talks now because of COVID, but we’ve been able to make up for it by doing a lot of online presentations with schools all around Australia.

**10:16 Fiona:** Oh, that's excellent. It's good that you can still keep in contact with students and get that message out there even during these COVID times, definitely. And if it isn't enough you're keeping busy with this, you also finished your Bachelor of Social Science majoring in politics at Macquarie University last year. Tell me a little bit about that and how your support worker helped you with your degree?

**10:39 Daniel:** Yes, I have a primary support worker who has been with me for 12 years. She’s been amazing and we’ve developed a really good friendship beyond support work which is fantastic. When I had need of a support worker for my university studies, my support worker jumped at the opportunity to help me. So I was studying at university part time, so I would only need to go there about two days a week on average. My support worker would take me to and from university, while we were my support worker would scribe for me, take notes in the lectures and tutorials. And whenever I had to do a quiz or an exam my support would also be my hands and type for me on the computer. This made it really easy as she was a touch typist and she could type as fast as I could speak which made it so much quicker to complete assignments, complete exams, and other tasks.

**12:17 Fiona:** And you're hoping to use that degree in the future for work?

**12:21 Daniel:** Yes, absolutely. So my full degree is Bachelor of Social Science majoring in politics. I want to tap into my love of politics and hopefully get a job in the political arena. My dream would be to work in government and use my passion for conservation to be able to create long-lasting change within government.

**12:57 Fiona:** I think any government would be really lucky to have you, that's great. And I also understand you like keeping fit playing wheelchair rugby, and you currently train with the Queensland state team in their development squad?

**13:11 Daniel:** I’ve always been active throughout my life, I’ve done horseriding, I’ve competed in the National Quarterhorse Championship when I was young, I’ve done rowing, I’ve done rock climbing, I’ve done tennis. But all those sports were all individual sports, and while they were great and I loved them, there was something missing and I couldn’t quite put my finger on it. And then the opportunity came up to try out wheelchair ruby, I decided to go for it because I’d seen it on TV. When I went there, it felt so natural, I was being in that team environment that really sparked my passion for wheelchair rugby. Having people rely on you, and you having to rely on other people and that whole team dynamic, was something that growing up I never had the opportunity to fully appreciate that part of sport. When I played wheelchair rugby, it was amazing.

**14:41 Fiona:** And you and your family only moved to Queensland about two years ago, and that's after you accessed the NIS for the first time in 2015. So how has working with Carers Queensland Local Area Coordination Partner in the Community program to implement your NDIS plan helped you?

**14:58 Daniel:** My Local Area Coordinator with Carers Queensland have been fantastic. She has been far more helpful than any other Local Area Coordinator that I’ve come across in my time with the NDIS. I feel like she understands me as a person, rather than just a number for the NDIS. And she understands my goals and where I see myself going, being able to help me mould my NDIS plan in line with what I’m currently doing, and what support needs I am likely to need moving forward as I go into the workforce, what that will look like for me. Also wheelchair rugby, and I’m hoping to make the Queensland state team next year so that’ll be a lot more high performance training for me, and what that will look like with the NDIS moving forward in that regard. Quite often she’ll think of things that I don’t think of, so it’s been really fantastic.

I am now volunteering at the ASEAN Australia Strategic Youth Partnership as a blog editor for them, which I am thrilled to be a part of. It’s really great for me, it is my first real, apart from my orangutan quest which was a self-motivated goal for Will and I. This is my first volunteering experience for another organisation, where I have to report to someone, and have to complete tasks in order to achieve desired outcomes. It’s a really great way of me entering the workforce for this first time, which is fantastic. I’m looking forward to engaging the NDIS, to see how the NDIS can help me in my new job.

**17:58 Voiceover:** You can find out more about Daniel and William Clark's work in orangutan conservation at tearsinthejungle.com.

Thanks very much to Fiona Stutz for the interview in today’s episode.

Thanks for joining us at Choice and Control, a Carers Queensland podcast. For more information about the National Disability Insurance Scheme or Carers Queensland, contact us online at carersqld.com.au. You can call us on 1300 999 636 or head to Facebook and look for Carers Queensland NDIS.

**18:30 Carers Queensland announcement:** Work isn’t just money in the bank. It’s learning new skills, facing challenges, and making a difference to the world around you. If someone in your life is leaving school soon, find out what support is available and explore options for the future in Carers Queensland’s free workshop Let’s Talk About Work. Find out more, check for events coming up near you and book your spot online at carersqld.com.au. You can also call us on 1300 999 636.

**Mentioned in this episode**

[Tears in the Jungle](https://tearsinthejungle.com/): Daniel and William’s website about their conservation work

[Queensland Wheelchair Rugby](https://www.facebook.com/QLDRugby/)

[ASEAN Australia Strategic Youth Partnership](https://aasyp.org/about-aasyp/)

[Carers Queensland website](https://carersqld.com.au/)

[Carers Queensland upcoming events and workshops](https://carersqld.com.au/events/)

[Carers Queensland NDIS on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/CarersQueenslandNDIS/)

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[YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgFvVhpv5V5PBzAFsPwZFcw)

[On the Carers Queensland website](https://carersqld.com.au/choice-and-control-podcast)