**October 2020**

**Declan Budd**

My nickname is Decky and I am 12 years old. I have an acquired brain injury from being sick as a toddler. I do lots of sports. My primary sport is swimming. I belong to Knox Pymble Swim Club and train at Pymble where Rafael Rodrigues is my coach. Its lots of fun and I really look forward to every session.  
  
I play soccer during winter with my mates for the Belrose Terrey Hills Soccer club and am part of the NSW Paralympic soccer squad – where I train with them but am looking forward to having the chance to play when I am 14.  
  
I snow ski and snowboard for Snow Country Ski Club (although that didn’t happen this winter) and at Interschools. I also played hockey for five years but had to stop this year as I couldn’t fit it in. My big goal is to represent Australia at the Paralympics for swimming and if I make the Paralympics my goal will be to win a medal. I also would like to play for the Pararoos one day.  
  
My proudest achievement is qualifying for the Paralympic swimming trials as a 12-year-old. Winning a few medals at the School Sports Australia Swimming Championships was also pretty special. I don’t really have any work/school goals at the moment – maybe as I find school quite hard my goal is to have fun and finish school, so I guess I’m still working on this bit!  
  
Training during COVID restrictions was hard. I was swimming six sessions a week before COVID, so I really missed my teammates and coach from swimming. Because I train at a private school, the school sports restrictions also meant I went back for a few weeks and then I couldn’t train there until the middle of September. I have been really lucky because Terrey Hills Swim School (which is not far from my house) let me train with them when I couldn’t train at Pymble.  
  
During the first COVID restrictions my coach ran three zoom sessions a week and our squad had three exercise circuit sessions to do at home each week as well. My family did lots to stay active – my mum is kind of crazy and because we live near the beach, bush and waterways we did surfing, bushwalking, mountain bike riding, wakeboarding, surf lifesaving board paddling, running, soccer, swimming in the surf (it was a little cold) and snorkelling – I think that’s about it.  
  
The best isolation tip is probably to stay fit and try and do something active every day…. I was lucky in that we could mix it up and never did the same thing two days in a row – and stay in contact with your friends and teammates by zoom and Xbox. I love cars and model trains, and my dream is to be able to swim and not have to go to school.  
  
I recently won the Margaret & Allan Gregson Encouragement Awards Swimming Male. Thank you, it means lots especially coming from the Gregson’s. They were my team manager on my first NSW School Swimming Team, so its extra special that it has come from them. It has also given me an extra boost to swim that little bit harder in training.  
  
The best thing about being diagnosed with an Acquired Brain injury when I was 8 years old is I have made so many great friends through CP activities, and I always have lots of fun with them.