Ben Greaves — An advocate of potential

'Be the best you, be real, and be awesome.' Ben aspires to live by this mantra. And no matter who you are, or where or how you connect in his life, he will ask you to do the same. It's just the kind of ethos you would hope someone who founded a disability organisation that specialises in supporting people with complex behavioural issues to have. It's not just a platitude either. It's sincere and heartfelt by Ben in both his personal and professional life, and it underscores how he runs his company, which is to 'be in it for heart, not for the dollars, support all those around you, not just your bank accounts. If the community sees heart and supportiveness, they will mirror that, and they will want to be a part of that.'

This is not glib lip-service for Ben. Being clear about who you are and what you want and then finding the courage and ability to embody it have been hard-earned. When you have grown up as the youngest of seven siblings, along with numerous step-fathers, step-siblings and 'randoms', getting noticed or heard was a battle. Battles he often lost, which have left memories of a childhood and homelife scarred with painful wounds that have taken years to resolve and heal. While he knows his mother did the best she could to give each of the children in her care the attention they needed, for him it often wasn't enough and he acted out accordingly.

In part, to escape and stabilise a troubled youth, Ben left home at an early age to live with the woman he was to later marry in 2004. She had a two-year old child with a disability, and he had fathered six children by the time he was 26 years old – losing his first-born, Elijah, when he was 30 days old. From the outset, the foundations of his family life were rocky at best, and after ten years of trying to make it work the marriage failed and they separated in 2012 and divorced in 2013. The following year Ben married again to a woman who had two children of her own, but after five years this marriage too failed, leaving him uncertain as to who he was or what it was that he wanted. It was not until he underwent a counselling process that he started to answer those questions and find a way to proceed. By exploring and re-examining the events and relationships of his past, he finally learnt who he is and what he stands for, and he began to live rather than merely exist.

Ben with son Benjamin, 2006

Ben & Adam on their wedding day with Ben's son Benjamin, 2025

Finding out who he is and what he stands for gave Ben the confidence to make big changes in his life and career. His next relationship was with Adam- who he met in 2019 and married in 2025. In 2022 he stepped up and took charge of his working life by successfully creating his own company– adaptCARE– and put into effect how he thought a registered disability and nursing provider should operate. This achievement is all the more remarkable for someone who had received little formal education. From the age of seven his mother had kept him at home to provide an emotional safety net against a succession of abusive men who became her partners and his step-fathers. His schooling, such as it was, ended when he was in Year 2, and by the time he was 13 he had entered the workforce fulltime working in retail jobs. At 18, he left his job in retail and after completing a certificate in Aged Care and Disability in Individual Support, he transitioned into aged and disability support work, where he found a sense of purpose.

Ben has worked in the care sector for over a quarter of a century, although in reality, having been his mother's care giver from an early age, it has been a lot longer. Starting as a support worker, he spent the first decade working in nursing homes, including Masonic homes (2000-2010), Cosgrove Park (AGSAG) later Sandhill (2004-2010), Aldersgate Newnham (2006-2008), Aldersgate Kings Meadows (2008-2013) and Glenara Lakes (2008-2013). Having initially wanting to be a nurse he finally enrolled in a nursing degree in 2010, however, taking time out of the workforce to complete his training became unrealistic with his family and working responsibilities. Instead, Ben made the move to case manager roles with home care providers, adding other qualifications along the way. From 2011-2013 he was a community case manager at Aldersgate, before joining Community Care TASMANIA in 2014-2019, where he held positions as rostering team leader, case manager, regional home support assessor team leader, disability services team leader and business development. At Riverview Retreat – later Enriched – he became Respite Manager from 2019-2020 and then General Manager client services until 2022 when he established adaptCARE. The benefit of learning from the ground up and gaining skills and experience from support work through to leadership roles is that Ben knows what the job requires at every level and he never asks someone to do something that he hasn't done or wouldn't do himself: that is a powerful leadership tool.

Ben, Community Care TASMANIA's participant in the MND Big Freeze, Launceston, 2018

Adam and Ben at Enriched staff Christmas Party, 2021

Using his empathy and street smarts, Ben quickly learnt the rules and ropes in navigating both the aged care and disability sector and had no difficulty in finding work in an industry crying out for skilled good workers. But his working life too has had its ups and downs. He has often butted heads with authority figures who have left him disappointed by their poor/bad judgement and behaviour and/or their lack of vision. However, even witnessing poor behaviour and incompetence from those in positions of power can have its upside. It showed Ben how he didn't want to act or be, and as he wrote in a social media post a few years ago, he was tired of being manipulated and bullied and 'stopped looking up the chain, and instead, looked down the chain. Learning, listening,

supporting and respecting those who are looking up to me, they are the ones I want to inspire, teach, support and assist to be the best they can be. Everyone deserves respect, appreciation and support. NO ONE deserves a bully.'

Ben's outlook and philosophy have paid off. He has rarely been disappointed by the relationships and connections he has made with work colleagues and those he has supported, and most would agree that Ben has made a positive difference in their lives, as they have in his. Sometimes these can be best distilled and described in a myriad of moments, ranging from seeing a participant's joy in dancing at a silent disco for the first time, or knowing a long-isolated carer finally feels seen and supported. Or from encouraging and supporting a long-term participant who had been non-ambulatory for over five years regain their ability to walk again with assistance, or in supporting NDIS participants move from aged residential care back into homes they can call their own, regaining independence, choice, and a true sense of belonging. 'These deeply human outcomes are the why behind our work and my vision', says Ben.

Ben with some of the adaptCARE team @ Community Achievement Awards Ceremony, 2024

Ben is a passionate advocate for inclusivity and actively promotes and demonstrates the importance of recognising and valuing all individuals within the community. He wants to ensure 'that no one is left unseen or unheard,' like he felt as a child. In creating adaptCARE, his vision was 'to endeavour to be a leader in the sector where people wanted to work and where participants feel listened to and received the support they needed. In short, he says, 'I wanted to use what I had learnt that worked, and address and change the things that didn't, to create the best workplace and person-centred care service possible.'

Leading by example and walking the walk and talking the talk plays a big part in Ben's success. 'To create a positive workplace and industry culture, I not only share the why of my vision, when I was the CEO or management of any organisation where I was employed, I would actively take part in how best to realise it. If we were short-staffed, I would fill shifts to support participants. If behavioural or logistical issues arise, I would turn up to help solve them. If providing support services are unreasonably reduced by funding bodies because we have done our job well, I go into bat to ensure a fair and just outcome is secured for participants. If other providers ask for

assistance or advice, I willingly provide whatever help is needed. If we are offering a community program, we invite everyone to take part. My team does likewise, and our approach has not only contributed to our growing reputation as a provider of high-quality supports and services within our Tasmanian communities, but it also shows we take our commitment to being collaborative changemakers seriously.'

Being a changemaker and turning your life around, however, takes effort, and it comes at a cost. While Ben feels deservedly proud of his achievements, his mission to empower himself as well as others has not been achieved without some heartbreak and pain along the way. As he knows only too well, shedding old ways of being to become the best you 'doesn't always come with clear answers or easy emotions.' Even when you know you can't afford not to make changes, you also know there is pain and loss in doing so. For Ben this has meant estrangement from much of his family- his mother, who died in 2025, siblings, former wives and all of his children bar Benjamin. This has not always been of his choosing, but Ben understands that 'love sometimes means stepping away with kindness, compassion and empathy.'

Ben with his mother Janis, 2019

Ben, a proud sponsor of the Tasmanian Children's Christmas Party, Hobart, 2025

While it took a while for Ben to discover his own identity and live accordingly, for the most part he has always been clear about what he wanted to achieve in his professional life. He feels fortunate to have met people who have helped show him how to meet that challenge. As he says, 'I'm extremely grateful to every individual that has been a part of my journey, some lifelong lessons learned, some great, and some not so great, however we never stop learning.' But at the end of the day, he says, 'I am just me, a supportive individual that sees the potential in others and supports them to fulfil that potential whether that's a staff member, a participant or a community member.' Again, this is just the sort of attitude you would hope to find in someone who runs an organisation aiming to make a positive and meaningful difference in the lives it touches and the community it serves.