

# Unit gives Daniel hope

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ELEVEN days after Daniel Suwitra celebrated his 16th birthday, he crashed into a tree on his motorbike in Bali.

He suffered from brain damage so severe that when he was flown to Royal Perth Hospital, doctors told his mum, Lisa Ghofur, he could not be rehabilitated.

"They wanted me to put Daniel into an aged care facility," Ms Ghofur said. "They told me to find somewhere else to put him."

She and Daniel moved to Sydney where the Royal Rehabilitation Centre at Ryde said they had room for him.

Sure enough, after entering into the Brain Injury Unit at the Royal Rehabilitation Centre, Daniel began to improve.

Before his accident, he was the vocalist and lead guitarist of a punk band, and during his rehabilitation he began listening to music and singing along to his favourite bands.

He even began to regain mo-

bility in his arms, but 20 months into his stay, Daniel was considered too advanced in his rehabilitation to stay in the Brain Injury Unit.

With nowhere else to go, he was forced to move into a nursing home and began to lose some of the skills he had worked hard to regain in rehabilitation.

"Daniel said to me, 'Mum, I shouldn't be here'," Ms Ghofur said. "They're all old here."

He became irritable and upset, and eventually the nursing home told Mrs Ghofur to find somewhere else for him.

It was at this point he was readmitted to Royal Rehab and into the Weemala Unit.

Royal Rehab has now opened a new, special purpose wing for people like Daniel who have an acquired brain injury, but are too young to be in an aged care facility.

The program is called the Neuro-behavioural Rehabilitation

Service, and patients are encouraged to decorate their rooms with posters and create a home-like environment to help them regain a sense of independence.

It is hoped patients will eventually be able to move back into the community.

Daniel is the first of seven patients to enter the joint venture between Royal Rehab and the UK's Brain Injury Rehabilitation Trust.

The Royal Rehabilitation Centre hopes that eventually, a new facility will be built on the hospital site to accommodate up to 20 patients like Daniel.

Daniel and his mother are glad they finally have a place for Daniel to feel at home and continue with the special care he needs.

"We shouldn't have to fight for our children to have the quality of life we all take for granted," Mrs Ghofur said. "A young person should never have to be put into an aged care facility."



Royal Rehabilitation Centre Ryde's chief executive Stephen Lowndes with Daniel Suwitra, Daniel's carer Sofia Venuti and his mother Lisa Ghofur in the new facility for those who have an acquired brain injury, but are too young to be in an aged care facility.