



Good sports and

A caring grandma who fought for change

By VANESSA McCAUSLAND

WHEN three-month-old Jackson Paul lost his sight, the use of his limbs and both of his parents in a car accident, his grandmother Judie Stephens was there to pick up the pieces.

Her dedication to her grandson, now 11, was recognised with a medal in the Order of Australia.

"I was staggered because I never really thought about anything like this ever," she said.

"I have been through a journey. I was a business woman before ... but as soon as the accident happened I devoted myself to caring for Jackson."

He needs 24-hour care and Mrs Stephens, of Sylvania, is his sole carer.

But when he is asleep this determined 60-year-old has a battle to fight.

She started campaigning for legislative changes and was involved in the introduction of the amended NSW Motor Accidents Act 1999.

"The NSW Office of the Protective Commission was appointed to look after Jackson's finances and over the coming months it dawned upon me that the way they financially managed Jackson and other clients was not good," she said.

Mrs Stephens determined campaigning has ensured that people in Jackson's position will not be taken advantage of financially.



Determined ... Judie Stephens cares for her grandson Jackson Paul. Picture: CRAIG GREENHILL

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PARALYMPIAN cyclist Lindy Hou and her tandem partner Janelle Lindsay are one of 52 first-time gold medalists receiving an Order of Australia Medal today.

Lindy Hou already has the challenge of being legally blind and racing at speeds of more than 100km/h.

When her sighted partner Janelle Lindsay was run over by a car and broke her back only six months before time trials for Athens, the pair thought their Olympic dream was over.

"I was run over by a woman when I was riding my bike one morning. I broke my back and my hip and my pelvis and shoulder," Lindsay said.

"I was in hospital for five or six weeks. I had to learn how to walk again properly. I had just six months to get on the bike again.

"I had to teach myself to walk again because the Olympics were in less than 12 months."

Hou couldn't have ridden without her partner.

"I was only diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa in 1996 and that's when I become legally blind. I can't see much even with glasses. I can see three steps away from me," Hou said.

The genetic condition affecting 3000 Australians has no cure. One in 80 carry the gene.

Hou and Lindsay's struggle makes their win and subsequent OAM special.

"I went through a bad time in my life, you get a time of loss — the loss of independence but then you pull yourself up out of it. And now I'm here," Hou said.

"I'm very honoured to be getting an OAM. I feel very humble about the whole thing.

"A lot of great people do heaps for community and receive it. How can I compare with those people."

For athletics Paralympian Kurt Fearnley, the best thing about getting an Order of Australia Medal is being able to put OAM at the bottom of e-mails.

"It felt kind of strange because I have friends I look up to like Louise [Sauvage] who got one in Atlanta and whenever I see OAM at the bottom of her e-mail I would never picture myself as Order of Australia Medalist."