2 April 2026

NDIA staff and partners in the community have recognised 10 years of the National Disability Insurance Scheme supporting the North Queensland community.

On 1 April 2016, Townsville became the first Queensland NDIS office to open its doors, marking the start of NDIS operations in the state.

The first NDIS plans in Queensland were approved in the Stanley Street office, with an initial staff of 10 National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) employees meeting participants face to face to complete access and planning.

The office also served as the hub for engagement and education activities for providers, families and the wider community.

Initially servicing the Townsville, Charters Towers and Palm Island communities, the Townsville NDIS service district now also includes Hinchinbrook, Burdekin, Mount Isa and surrounds, supporting more than 9,000 participants to achieve their goals.

As the number of North Queensland participants has grown, so has the NDIA staff supporting them.

Around 140 people support participants and families, carers and providers, including 40 staff working in regional and remote areas.

NDIA Townsville senior director Maria Gold was one of the original staff members and says the early days were exciting, challenging, humbling and most of all, rewarding.

“We were just excited about what this scheme could bring for people with disabilities,” she said.

“We knew that this was about to change the fabric of the Australian community, not only for people with disabilities, but their families.

“The NDIS can change a person’s life. I’ve seen it time and time again.

Desmond Lee led the implementation of NDIS service delivery in Queensland, starting in Townsville. Now Queensland General Manager for NDIS service delivery, Des has seen many changes over the past 10 years but says some things will always stay the same.

“The joy of seeing participants and their families thrive and reaching their goals will never get old,” he said.

“From the very first participants in 2016 to supporting more than 9,000 people with disability in the Townsville region, one thing that hasn’t changed is that participants are at the heart of everything we do.”

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