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One of the many families benefitting from the NDIS is the Winbanks family from Greenvale, whose 23-year-old daughter Lauren has an intellectual disability and autism.

Lauren's mum Diane said she first had concerns about her daughter's development when she wasn't meeting the same milestones as her twin brother.

"When you have twins it's inevitable that your life turns upside down, but even more so because we had two very different children," Diane said.

"We started to realise at quite a young age that Lauren was developing differently to her brother."

Throughout her childhood, Lauren faced challenges at school, none more so than with verbal communication. She generally only communicated with her mother.

Diane and her husband Jeff worked tirelessly to give both children equal opportunities.

"It put a strain on our family. I had given up my career and we were broke, but we promised our son and daughter that we would leave no stone unturned for them.

"We've tried our hardest to focus on Lauren's strengths and use those strengths to build on the things she's not so good at."

In her early primary school years, Lauren's family discovered music had a profound impact on her, and began weaving it into Lauren's life where they could.

"Fast forward 20 years and as a result of weekly lessons and daily practice over 18 years, she's just completed her grade five piano exam!"

Despite the improvements, the Winbanks family still faced obstacles in providing the right support and care for their daughter, but since joining the NDIS in November 2018, the financial and mental strain has been lifted.

Lauren now receives funding for assistance with daily tasks and personal care in the home, occupational therapy, and support workers who take her to and from her job sorting LEGO – something that has been life-changing for Lauren.

Lauren secured a job sorting LEGO straight out of secondary school and has been working ever since, but recently when her employer asked Lauren to work an extra day, her family had concerns.

“It’s a long way from where we live - almost a four hour round trip, because it’s the perfect job I was happy to take her one day a week. The fact they wanted Lauren for two days was very exciting, but it now meant an extra day of driving.

“Our NDIS support worker is now able to take Lauren to and from work, and it’s been life-saving.

“Her work is so important for her. It builds her self-esteem and she is so good at what she does. It wouldn’t be happening if not for the NDIS plan, it’s literally changed everything.”

Alongside her work with Lego, Lauren also excels at horse riding, with dreams to one day represent Australia in the Special Olympics. It’s something she also maintains to help ease pain and swelling in her legs, a condition associated with her disability.

“Before the NDIS we only had a small amount of money that wasn’t enough, and we had to prioritise. It came down to what we could afford that week.

“Now Lauren has these services consistently, she has greater access to the community.

“If Lauren can achieve these amazing results, anyone else should be able to achieve their goals too.

“That is what I think the NDIS has the potential to do, give people hope and as a parent I can’t tell you how happy we are.”

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