5 February 2014

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will host its first Northern Territory community forums this month as part of preparations for the scheme's launch in the Barkly region from 1 July.

The forums will be held at the Tennant Creek Civic Centre on Wednesday, 19 February from 10am to midday for the general public and from 2pm to 4pm for potential scheme participants and their families.

David Bowen, chief executive of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), said people with disability, their families, carers, service providers and community leaders are encouraged to attend. The NDIA is responsible for delivering the NDIS.

"We want to draw on your local expertise and knowledge to ensure the NDIS in the Barkly is the best it can be," Mr Bowen said.

"For the scheme to be successful in changing the lives of people with a disability and their families, it must be delivered in a culturally-sensitive way that responds to community needs," he said.

"We look forward to meeting local people at our Tennant Creek forums the first official NDIS events in the Northern Territory."

The Barkly is one of three new trial sites that will commence operation on 1 July this year.

Archie Baker moved from Darwin to Tennant Creek in October to oversee the Barkly NDIS trial site.

He has many years' experience in the field, specialising in statutory social work, disability services and indigenous affairs policy delivery in South Australian and Top End Territory communities as a senior public servant.

"It's really exciting to be meeting with community groups, getting to know all of the local characters, and working together to prepare for when the NDIS opens to participants on 1 July," Mr Baker said.

"There's a lot of buzz about the NDIS around town and people are very supportive, even though they aren't necessarily aware of the finer details of the scheme," he said.

"These forums will give people a better understanding of how the NDIS will help people with disability access the reasonable and necessary supports they need and they can put forward all of their questions and ideas."

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