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There is nothing more precious to a parent than to watch their child grow up, be happy and live their best life.

So it is with Petrea Aslett, a Brisbane mum whose son, Hudson, 10, loves to surf with his mates at the Disabled Surfers Association (DSA) on the Gold Coast.

Hudson, who lives with cerebral palsy, has been surfing with the DSA since the age of 3, and while it is his favourite activity, Petrea says it was a challenging time before the NDIS entered their lives.

“I was acting more as a carer than a parent,” Petrea said.

“It was exhausting. Being able to watch him in the surf now is just wonderful.”

Petrea is part of the three-fold increase in families and carers who say the NDIS has helped them to better care for their family member (over 5 years in the Scheme).

There are 34,000 Australians living with cerebral palsy and more than 17,000 are active NDIS participants.

Apart from his support workers, Hudson also has other help including physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech pathology sessions.

“All these supports help to make him feel like a regular kid who can more easily participate and access community activities,” Petrea said.

Hudson says he always loved being in the surf, supported by cheering DSA volunteers who also keep him safe, but now he has another reason to be happy.

“I love to ride the waves,” Hudson said.

The DSA is a volunteer organisation that hosts several surfing meets a year and has 19 branches across Australia.

National and Gold Coast DSA president Ian Gay says the aim of the group is to “put smiles on dials” by taking people of all disabilities out for a surf.

“It gives people like Hudson a chance to feel a part of society, a part of something bigger,” Ian said.

“When he first came surfing with us, Hudson was a shy little boy, but he’s now a big part of our surfing family, as are all the parents, carers and volunteers.”

An inclusive community is part of why 84% of participants under the age of 14, like Hudson, feel welcomed or actively included (after 4 years on the NDIS).

Ian’s daughter, Imogen, is one of those volunteers and has been supporting Hudson in the water since his first day with the group.

“We have a special bond, I get as much joy out of it as Hudson does,” Imogen said.

Hudson, who is in Year 5, wants to be a chef when he grows up, satisfying his two loves – food and making people happy.

“At home, Hudson loves his Caesar salad, and he eats lots of fruit, too,” Petrea said.

But at the beach, it’s a different story.

“I always love a good sausage sizzle after a surf,” Hudson said.

“Tomato sauce, hold the onions.”

Petrea is part of the 75% of families and carers who are more confident about the future of their family since the joining the NDIS.

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