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After moving to Queensland from Venezuela, Nathaly and her family encountered a new set of challenges as they began their new life in Australia.

As the full-time carer of her daughter Laura, who has intellectual disability, Nathaly was faced with finding new Australian schools and establishing new professional therapies and supports for Laura, while trying to learn English as a second language.

‘We came from South America. We spoke Spanish and Laura was 15 years old. It was so stressful for us,’ Nathaly said.

‘So, while we didn't know about Laura's future, I started from the beginning.’

At the age of 19, Laura met access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and through the help of Carers Queensland, was able to find supports and work towards achieving greater independence as a young adult.

‘Oh my God. I would say the NDIS has changed my life. I went from being a full-time carer for Laura to having a life,’ Nathaly said.

Life in Venezuela was vastly different for the family of 4, with no NDIS or programs to support carers. With the reassuring knowledge that her daughter was in safe, professional hands, Nathaly could now pursue her own goals, for the first time.

‘After the NDIS came to my family, I started doing things for myself like my studies and applying for jobs, going to do exercise or hobbies, or just relax and have a coffee without any concerns about what Laura is doing or not doing,’ Nathaly said.

‘Since the NDIS I can set my own goals. I can do what I want or what I need to do.

‘I have a full-time job. I bought my own car. I help my husband with all the financial things, and I support my family overseas.

‘So, this means for me, a big change. This changed my life completely. I am more relaxed because I know Laura in good hands.

Nathaly also credits the change with improving the balance in her family life, where each member is now able to have their needs met and pursue personal goals and interests.

‘My family's not the same. Everybody is now working towards goals. It’s much better,’ Nathaly said.

As a full-time carer, Nathaly found it difficult to spend quality time with her husband and other children, yet with the confidence of knowing that Laura was in good hands, she was able to take a short holiday for the first time.

Having this short break meant the family came to appreciate Laura’s growing independence as she transitioned to adulthood.
This also gave Laura the opportunity to learn new skills as she works towards a future of supported independent living.

‘We learned that Laura is good by herself. I learned she can have a life without me. She's working towards her independence,’ Nathaly said.

For Nathaly, being able to participate in yoga, learn new skills through study and make new friendships has also improved her mental and physical health.

‘So, that is one of my goals. To meet new people and work towards my physical and mental wellbeing,’ Nathaly said.

‘I feel good. I wake up every day and I know what to do. I know what I want. I know me as a person, as a mum, as a wife, as a friend, as a member of a team. I know everybody can have a life like that, but for me, that means a lot.’

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