

## MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 16 November 2015

### Leading organisations partner in North Queensland, office to be opened by Hon. Coralee O'Rourke, Minister for Disability Services

In an exciting development for the not-for-profit space, **Open Minds Australia** and **Ability Options** have partnered to bring disability, mental health and employment support services to the Townsville, Charters Towers and Palm Island regions of North Queensland.

Each year, a staggering 20%, or approximately one in every five Australians, experience a mental illness. Similarly, over four million Australians have some form of disability. With 321,500 people receiving disability support services in 2013-2014 and an annual cost of mental illness in Australia estimated at \$20 billion, the Open Minds Australia and Ability Options partnership could not have launched at a better time; providing vital, much needed support in North QLD.

To celebrate the partnership, the organisation will hold an official opening at the new office this **Thursday 19 November** at, 287 Ross River Road, Aitkenvale from 2.30pm-4.00pm. Opening the office will be guest of honour **Hon. Coralee O'Rourke MP**, Member for Mundingburra, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland.

The partnership is timely with the early introduction of NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) trial sites to the Townsville, Charters Towers and Palm Island regions. Around 1600 people are expected to be eligible for the NDIS in these early transition sites, with up to 600 of these people expected to receive their funded packages by 1 July 2016. The remaining 1000 eligible people from the early transition sites will receive their funded packages from July 2016. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides individual support for people living with disability. \*

CEO of Open Minds Australia, Marie Fox, reflects the excitement of both organisations, stating, *'we are really proud to be partnering with Ability Options, another leader in their field to bring a suite of programs supporting the communities of Townsville, Charters Towers and Palm Island. Ability Options brings with them a wealth of knowledge and experience, and together Open Minds Australia and Ability Options will offer a really tailored and personalised service where empowerment and independence will be our commitment to our customers.'*

CEO of Ability Options, Fred Van Steel, is thrilled about the opportunities that Ability Options and Opening Minds joining forces will provide individuals around disability, mental health and employment supports in North Queensland and added, *'Open Minds have a wonderful history of serving the people of Queensland and it is a privilege to be working with them to make a difference in North Queensland. There is a strong synergy between our two organisations and it comes from our passion for supporting all people to live the best life possible. We are also thrilled to be able to share our experiences from our work in the NDIS sites in NSW with the people of North Queensland.'*

-ENDS-

Media are welcome to attend the event, please register via the contact points below.

[Open Minds | Ability Options Launch](#)

**Thursday 19 November** at, 287 Ross River Road, Aitkenvale from 2.30pm-4.00pm.

For further information please contact: Sacha Nielsen, Communications Officer, Open Minds, M 0409 048 554 or Shivani Jayasinghe, Marketing Manager, Ability Options, M 0408 214 180

### **About Open Minds Australia**

Open Minds is a leading not-for-profit organisation with a strong focus on working directly with people to enhance mental health and wellbeing. The organisation has a long history and was founded as the Queensland Wattle League in 1912. Over 100 years later, Open Minds has evolved to offer a range of programs and tailored support services focused on the individual needs of each person they support. This includes Lifestyle, Living, Employment and Health Streams. At the heart of what Open Minds does is a commitment to working alongside individuals and focusing on their strengths to enable individual achievement and recovery.

### **About Ability Options**

Ability Options provide a range of services that focus on independence, empowerment, meaningful lifestyles and valued roles within community. Ability Options advocate for all people to be included as valued and respected citizens who have unique skills, gifts and personal strengths to contribute to their community and strive to deliver supports and services using a person-centred approach. The organisation aims to meet the needs and wants of each individual person through community services, accommodation, clinical services and employment.

\*Sourced from <http://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/our-sites/qld>