

# STEPS PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

## SKILLS TO ENABLE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

From the Manager,

Another year draws to a close, heralding another year of STEPS Program members gathering in local communities throughout Queensland for shared learning, shared coping and shared experiences....plus a lot of fun along the way.

Some novel events this year included:

1. the Potential Unlimited Brain Injury program in Tharwa, ACT in October. Our group of 10 volunteer peer leaders (plus a couple of extras!) and Ben and myself- was the first from Queensland to participate in this a specially-designed 7day Outward Bound Adventure Program for adults who have experienced a brain injury. See page 6 for the full report
2. offering leader training to a specialised brain injury service in Victoria, Melbourne City Mission. They have already run the STEPS Skills Program locally, using our peer-professional model for program delivery. They are planning to offer further programs in 2014, which is very exciting. See below for more details.
3. increased number of 'combined' Network Group meetings. Where possible, a number of our groups enjoyed a joint gathering with another group from a nearby community, e.g. Bundaberg/Fraser Coast hinterland groups, Ipswich/Logan groups.

Of course, we cannot overlook the importance of continuing to offer both the STEPS Skills Programs and STEPS Network Groups right here in Queensland. From Cairns to the Gold Coast and everywhere in between, we want to thank our trained STEPS Program leaders and other community supporters for partnering with us to ensure we are expanding our reach across our state to adults with acquired brain injury and their families. As I am always saying, without you and your commitment, we have no program, which is the truth....so a sincere thank you from the STEPS Program for all your efforts in 2013. We wish everyone a safe and relaxing festive season and Happy New Year 2014.

**Areti**

### STEPS PROGRAM LEADER TRAINING TRAVELS TO CHILLY MELBOURNE

Unseasonally cold late October weather greeted us (Ben and Areti) as we headed down to Melbourne to offer STEPS Program Leader Training to a specialised brain injury service, Melbourne City Mission. The training was held at their Compass Clubhouse facility in North Fitzroy, which is operated by and

for Clubhouse members (adults who have experienced an acquired brain injury), who are involved in all levels of decision-making, including future directions of the Clubhouse.



This philosophy and involvement of members marries particu-

larly well with the STEPS Program's philosophy of peer involvement (who are also adults who have experienced an acquired brain injury). A total of 7 people completed the training. They are now piloting doing the STEPS Skills Program together, so they can then sensibly plan roll-out of the Program more fully in their service in 2014.

We look forward to our continuing work with Melbourne City Mission.



Queensland Government

Princess Alexandra Hospital  
Metro South Health

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#### Special points of interest:

- ☉ STEPS Program Leader Training—Melbourne City Mission
- ☉ Potential Unlimited Brain Injury Program
- ☉ STEPS Program—email addresses have changed

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# STEPS SKILLS PROGRAM REPORTS

## Cairns North

We had really great attendance at the September workshop, 11 in total, with a mix of people with ABI and their partners/carers. Everyone fully participated and shared their thoughts and stories during the skills program, establishing a bond from the first session. Food seemed to be the favourite choice for the group activity and so the vote for a banquet at a nearby Chinese restaurant was unanimous! The group made plans to meet again at the *The Jade* 2 restaurant on the last Friday of the following month. We all decided Yum Cha for \$15 per head was the go, so 8 courses later and plenty to eat we were all very satisfied and the food was fabulous. Helene brought along some choco-

late snacks and balloons to celebrate, so that was great. John, Rachel's partner, took photos of each person



receiving their certificate. This group genuinely enjoyed each other's company, and a couple of participants, who weren't too sure if the workshop was really



for them, commented on it's value in bringing together people going through similar experiences and in sharing their stories. They were also made aware of WET STEPS, with one participant attending that, they

were keen to hear more details of the next WET STEPS. It's been a good group and quite a few of the par-

ticipants spoke up about how much they felt the group had helped them regain some confidence socially and with forging ahead with their plans. Tim said he had even achieved the short term goal he planned from Week 2 so that was very positive.

## Centenary

The Centenary STEPS Skills Program commenced on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August with Glenys Rye (Red Cross), Elaine Trotman (Trained Peer Leader), and Scott McDonald (Trained Peer Leader) as the group leaders. The development of a group in the Centenary area was only possible through the combined efforts of many, especially Elaine and Scott who actively promoted the program in the

area over the past couple of years. The group was a great success! Right from the start of the program, there was a great energy and connection among the group members. There was always plenty of discussion around the table as group members shared their stories of life after brain injury. The group held their week 6 activity at a local café and have since gone onto form the Centenary STEPS Network Group. The Centenary STEPS Net-



work Group now provides a valuable source of support for people



who have experienced a brain injury and their family members in the Brisbane West region. The group has plans to expand in the New Year as we look to offer more 6-week STEPS Skills Program in the region.

## Chermside

The Chermside STEPS group met in September this year at the Uniting Church. There were people from a variety of backgrounds and age groups and the mix generated some thoughtful discussions as we made our way through the workbook. It didn't take long for people to feel

relaxed enough to share their stories. We chose to stay at the church for our break-up and enjoyed cooked meals like lambs fry, rissoles and quiche. Quite a few people expressed interest in keeping in touch through the Nundah/Chermside support group.

It was a pleasure to meet everyone there and a moving experience to be part of. Thank you to all involved!  
Peter and Raelene

## Capalaba

The second 6-week STEPS Skills Program in the Brisbane Bayside region this year was held at Capalaba commencing on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October.

Lone Haywood (Open Minds) and Kerry Tomlinson (Trained Peer Leaders) were the leaders for the group. Lone and Kerry both reflected that because the group was

relatively small in numbers, there was always plenty of time for each person in the group to express their feelings and share their experiences.

This is what a STEPS group is all about! The group decided on fish and chips at Wynnum for the week 6

activity – the weather was perfect and a great day was had by all!

All participants from the Capalaba STEPS Skills Program have been invited to join the existing Bayside STEPS Network Group, which meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month.

## Beenleigh

The first STEPS Skills Program in Beenleigh in the past couple of years started on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October at the Beenleigh Events Centre. This course was run in partnership with Anglicare (Logan/Beenleigh Office) with Natalie Pereira and Derek Jolliffe from Anglicare as the leaders.

The participants commented that it was great to come together in a

group where they could openly discuss their experiences of life after brain injury. Many commented that they had felt alone in their journey before attending the course. However, with the support of the group, they felt better prepared to move forward and achieve their goals.

The group had lunch together at a local club for their week 6 activity.

At this stage, all participants have been invited to join the existing Logan STEPS Network Group. However, we hope to be able to develop a STEPS Network Group in Beenleigh in 2014.

## Caloundra

In Sept/Oct a STEPS program was held for the first time in Caloundra. This was facilitated by Angela and Gill and was held in a room at the Caloundra library.

We started the program with 14 participants including support people which we were really happy about as this was an untried location for us. Although we had a few challenges with the size of the room and temperamental air conditioning, everyone settled in well for the six

week program.

People's experiences were shared, new friendships created and program exercises completed with participants enjoying coming together each week to complete the program.

All too soon we found ourselves at the end of the program and the week six break-up activity. It had been decided that the group would have a fish and chip lunch at Bulcock Beach, unfortunately due to bad

weather this had to be changed at the last minute to a get-together at a bistro across from the beach, which was still enjoyed by those who attended the break up.

The group has since come together to discuss having their own Network Group and this will be trialled starting in January 2014.

The Caloundra participants are also most welcome to join the Maroochydore Network Group if they wish to.

## Headway Gold Coast

The Headway Gold Coast STEPS Skills Program started on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September with Annette Prentice (Headway) and Che Phillips (Trained Peer Leader) as the leaders. This course was run specifically for clients, volunteers and staff of Headway Gold Coast, which is a not-for-profit community organisation that provides support to people who have experienced a brain injury and their families in the Gold Coast area. Those who participated in the course regularly attend Headway's day respite centre. The program offered a

great structure to help people discuss their experiences and learn strategies and skills to better manage. While most of the people in the group already knew each other, they found that the program helped them to learn new things about each other that they had not known before. The group also commented that it was

great to have Che's lived experiences as a leader in the group. The group's week 6 activity was held at Café Rockpool in the Broadwater Parklands at Southport. The group has been invited to join in with the existing Gold Coast STEPS Network Group.



## North Lakes

I was very eager to participate in the very first STEPS Program for North Lakes as a Peer Leader. I have been a carer for over 9 years for my husband who has an Acquired Brain Injury. I was interested in becoming a Peer Leader as we had benefitted from participating in the STEPS Program and I thought it would be

great to provide support to others coping with the aftermath of an ABI. Our group was quite a large group, with a varied mix of people who shared their stories with us of how they came to have an ABI. The group shared their stories, their struggles and their successes and what they have learned about them-

selves and recognising how far they have come post injury. I was very honoured to be a part of such a wonderful group and it was great to see a group coming together and sharing their lives with us and helping to build their lives back up again.  
Veronica Malinao

# STEPS NETWORK GROUP REPORTS

It's been another big year for the many STEPS Network Groups throughout Queensland. As of December 2013, there are 27 STEPS Network Groups throughout the state with membership well in excess of 300 people. Each group varies in size and focus, but each shares a common goal of providing a sup-

port base and network for people who have experienced a brain injury and their family members within

strong networks. While most groups have a social focus, they are also actively involved in raising community awareness and advocating for the needs of people with brain injury. The following STEPS Network Group Reports provide a snapshot of just a few groups and showcase what they have been up to in 2013.



their respective local communities. Some have been running for a long time, while others are still finding their feet. Some groups are large in numbers, while others are small yet

## Cairns Wet STEPS

After several months of enjoying the peace and tranquillity of fishing (without actually catching any fish!), the Cairns Wet STEPS group finally

caught not one, but two, fish in recent times. One fish was caught at their old fishing spot at the Barron River Jetty, while the wolf herring

was caught from their new fishing place at Trinity Inlet. Here's to more successful fishing for the Cairns Network Group!



## Yeowoomba

Over the past few months our STEPS Group has been meeting another community group from Blue Care "the blokes bus" and enjoying a morning of tenpin bowling together. The competition is always fierce with lots of sledging going on. In November the STEPS team finally won and while we were all enjoying lunch, Andrew from Blue Care made

a trophy out of an upturned plastic cup with a piece of cucumber stuck in the top of it and presented it to our team. To end our year we are having one final match off in December - let's hope we can take the trophy again. These mornings have been lots of fun for everyone and we have a great friendship with the men from 'the blokes bus', hopefully we

can continue this in 2014.



## Mackay

The Mackay STEPS Network Group was formed following the successful completion of the Mackay STEPS Skills Program in August this year. The group has held a number of group meetings since this time, including catching up for a game of lawn bowls and a formal meeting to explore the topic of stress management and relaxation after brain injury. The group is supported by the staff from Bluecare Galaxy Mackay and by Sue Jorgensen, a local Social Worker from the Community Rehabilitation Team. In November 2013, Ben Turner visited Mackay to train three new STEPS Program Leaders (Sue Jorgensen, Peya Petts, and John

McNamara). Ben also facilitated a session about self-identity after brain



injury for the network group. The Mackay STEPS Network Group is quite diverse - some group members are relatively early on in their journey of life after brain injury; while

for others, it's been decades since they experienced their injury. This provided for some very interesting discussion as each person shared their experiences and challenges. Group members commented on the benefits of being about to connect with each other and share information and ideas. This is particularly important in regional centres, where access to specialist brain injury services can be somewhat limited. The group has already made some plans for 2014 and is hoping to increase their numbers by offering another 6-week STEPS Skills Program in Mackay sometime early in the New Year.

## Young ABI Group

The idea of forming a STEPS group for young adults who have experienced a brain injury was first thought of a few years back. However, it was not until 2013 that we were finally able to make it happen! Marilyn Ginn and Maria Hoogstrate (both experienced STEPS Program Leaders) led the first 6-week STEPS Skills Program for young adults (aged 18-30 years) in May this year. Two of the participants in the first group (Penny and Kali) then went on to train as STEPS Program Peer Leaders. With Marilyn and Maria's support, Kali and Penny successfully led another 6-week STEPS Skills Program for young adults in October/

November. The two groups have now merged to form the Young ABI STEPS Network Group. The group provides an excellent outlet for young people to discuss the unique challenges that they encounter after experiencing a brain injury in such a critical time of their lives. There is a great sense of friendship, support and fun from within the group. The group plans to keep things going in 2014 and hopefully widen the network to reach out to other young people who might be



struggling with the effects of brain injury. The group wants to keep things social and have already come up with some great ideas for 2014 including movies, visiting the Gallery of Modern Art and just generally hanging out!

## Caboolture

A glorious, early spring day by the water certainly made up for the lack of catching any fish, when the Caboolture Brainiacs headed to Bribie Island (about 30 minutes from Caboolture) for a day of fishing and

lunch in September. While no-one caught any fish, it was certainly relaxing to drop a line and have a chat to pass the time. The jetty is fairly new, so has very good wheelchair access, right down onto the floating pontoons. After a spot of unsuccessful fishing in the sun, we all returned to the shade to enjoy lunch together.



# POTENTIAL UNLIMITED PROGRAM 2013

In October 2013, the STEPS Program sent the first group from Queensland to Canberra to complete the Potential Unlimited Brain Injury Program. The Potential Unlimited Program is run by Outward Bound Australia and has been specifically designed for adults who have experienced a brain injury. The program combines a range of challenging outdoor adventure activities with personal goal setting and group support to help people with brain injury, achieve their potential.

In total, 10 people with brain injury (mostly STEPS Program Peer Leaders) along with Ben and Areti travelled to Canberra for the week-long course. The opportunity to participate in the program was made possible by a donation to Outward Bound Australia from the Friendly Ride Foundation, which was established by Andy Friend and Kerri Rawlings after Kerri experienced a brain injury herself. Andy is the former coach of the ACT Brumbies, who play in the Super 14 Rugby competition. With Kerri's support, Andy rode his bike from Cooktown to Canberra to raise funds for brain injury. All funds raised were donated to Brain Injury Australia and Outward Bound Australia to support people who have experienced a brain injury to achieve their potential. In addition to the support of the Friendly Ride Foundation, many STEPS groups around the state and other individuals/organisations got behind our local fundraising efforts to assist with the cost of travel and equipment. Thanks for your excellent support to make the trip possible!

The trip exceeded all our expectations. It was challenging, fun, richly rewarding, and very beneficial for all who attended. As one participant put it – "the trip was incredible". Some of the activities that the group completed during the trip included hiking, abseiling (both down a cliff face and into a cave), caving, rafting, high ropes, and rock climbing. The experience was much more than a series of fun activities though. Collectively, the program provided opportunities for personal reflection, teamwork, adjustment to injury, and development of confidence and skills as each person worked through perceived barriers to achieve more than what they had initially thought possible. The trip provided an excellent opportunity for leader development – those who attended are now drawing upon their experiences of the trip and the skills they acquired to better support people in their own local STEPS groups. Those who attended have commented that they feel more confident and better prepared to pursue their own personal goals in life and to help others to achieve their potential following brain injury.

Those who attended the course have continued to meet since arriving home to consolidate the experiences back into everyday life and to continue the friendships that were formed during the trip. The group held a special thank-you event for families, friends and sponsors on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December. The highlight of the event was a performance by the Brisbane Brass Band, who played a musical piece that had been composed by one of the participants from the trip. Shannan started composing the piece while sitting around the fire one night in Canberra – for Shannan, music is a way that she can express her thoughts and feelings. Shannan found that the Potential Unlimited Program gave her an opportunity to reflect on her journey and join a few of the pieces of the puzzle so that she can continue with her life as it is now! The STEPS Program hopes to continue working with Outward Bound to extend the opportunity for others to do the Potential Unlimited Program in the future.





Potential  
Unlimited  
Brain  
Injury  
Program  
2013

# STEPS PROGRAM LEADER NETWORK

**ALERT, ALERT—STEPS Program email addresses have changed:**

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**STEPS Program—**STEPS@health.qld.gov.au

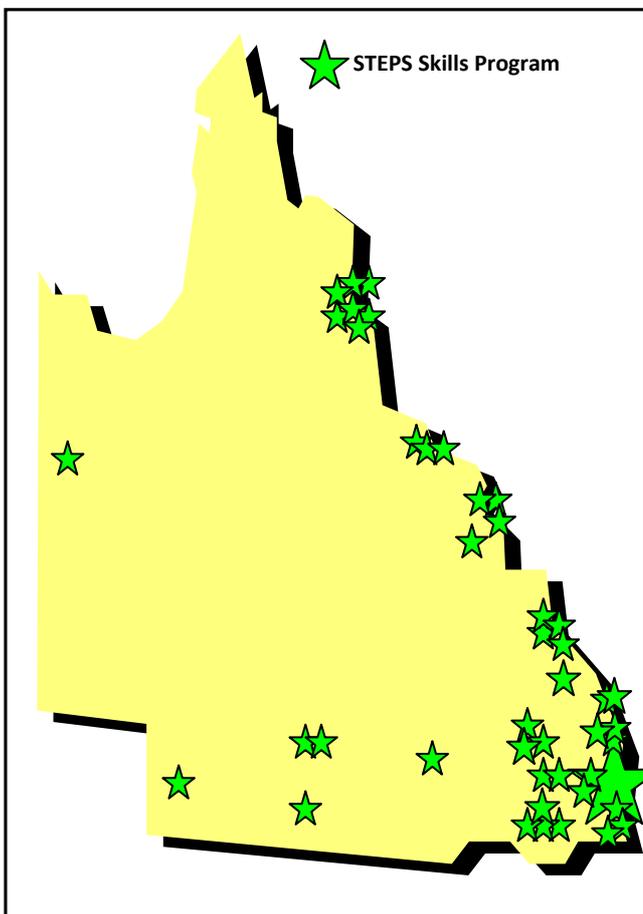
Please adjust your email address books if you have our old email addresses saved. If you do not save our new email addresses, your email server may interpret our new email address as 'junk'/'trash'/'spam' **AND YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE EMAILS FROM US INTO YOUR INBOX.**

**Date Claimer—2014  
STESP Program Leader  
Teleconference**

The first STEPS Program Leader Teleconference for 2014 will be on **Thursday the 6<sup>th</sup> of February—10am-11am**. This teleconference will be a business planning meeting to set the agenda for ideas and topics to address throughout 2014. More information will be circulated in the New Year to keep leaders up to date!

## STEPS SKILLS PROGRAM IN QLD MAP

**2013** - Gold Coast (3), Browns Plains, Ipswich, Logan North, Brisbane Bayside (2), Caboolture, Cairns (2), Gladstone, Buranda Young ABI (2), Coopers Plains, Atherton, Rockhampton, Mackay, Toowoomba, Centenary / Middle Park, Bundaberg, Chermiside, Townsville, Sunshine Coast (2), North Lakes, Beenleigh.



**2012** - Bundaberg, Cairns (2), Gladstone (2), Gold Coast, Ipswich, Kingaroy, Maroochydore, Rockhampton, Yeppoon, Toowoomba (2), Brisbane (10)

**2011** - Biloela, Bundaberg, Yeppoon, Rockhampton (2), Southport, Townsville (2), Cairns (2), Noosaville, Maroochydore, Maryborough, Brisbane (12)

**2010** - Mt Isa, Warwick, Rockhampton, Cairns (2), Mackay, Townsville, Kingaroy, Yarraman, Gold Coast (2), Beaudesert, Toowoomba (2), Brisbane (13)

**2009** - Townsville, Warwick, Cairns, Rockhampton, Mackay, Gordonvale, Ipswich, Redcliffe, Brisbane (11)

**2008** - Rockhampton, Warwick, Maroochydore, Far South West Qld, Cunnamulla, Mt Isa, Brisbane (5)

### THE STEPS PROGRAM

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