

STEPS PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

SKILLS TO ENABLE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

From the Manager,

It has been a busy few months for the STEPS Program.

In July, we were offered a unique opportunity to be involved in the Potential Unlimited Brain Injury program, a specially-designed 7-day Outward Bound Adventure Program for adults who have experienced a brain injury.

We are now preparing to send a group of our volunteer peer leaders (plus 1 or 2 extras!) to Canberra in October. This is the first time a group from Queensland will participate in this program, which is very exciting. Watch out for a full report in our December newsletter. See page 7 for some of our fundraising efforts to date to make this trip happen.

Kelsey, our admin assistant welcomed her first child, a daughter Arabella, in July. Congratulations to Kelsey and Matt. Enjoy this wonderful time together and best wishes from all at the STEPS Program. **Areti**

Brain Injury Awareness Week 2013 Sunday 12 August to Sunday 18 August

The STEPS Program celebrated this event in the following ways:

Scheduling our Brisbane-based STEPS Program Leader Training during the week beforehand (we can't do it during the exact week due a public holiday in Brisbane on the Wednesday). We trained some fantastic new leaders in Brisbane, ready to offer our STEPS Skills Program to new communities around greater Brisbane.

Supporting our Network Groups with local celebrations, as determined by local Network Groups. Several Network Groups hosted specific, special events to raise awareness of brain injury in their local communities. Other Network Groups continued with their regular, valuable monthly gatherings as a group. Over 300 people are now active members of our 25 STEPS Network Groups around Queensland, enjoying regular peer support and local, sustained community participation.

Many groups chose to combine their celebrations with support for the Potential Unlimited brain injury outdoor education trip fundraising effort—more about that on page 7.

Supporting the national Bang on a Beanie campaign. The 2 key initiatives we supported were the Bang on a Barbie and the Bang on a Beanie campaigns.



Queensland
Government

Princess Alexandra Hospital
Metro South Health



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Special points of interest:

- ☉ Brain Injury Awareness Week 2013
- ☉ Brain Injury Awareness Week Fundraising
- ☉ Feature article about Rockhampton
- ☉ Trip to Central Queensland

Inside this issue:

Message from the Manager	1
Brain Injury Awareness Week 2013	1
STEPS Skills Program Group Reports	2-4
• Atherton	
• Maroochydore	
• Edmonton	
• Gladston	
• Young ABI—Buranda	
• Rockhampton	
• Robina	
• Mackay	
STEPS Program Network Group Reports	5
• Logan / Ipswich	
• Fraser / Fraser Coast Hinterland	
• Bayside—Casuarina Lodge	
Trip to Central QLD	6
Spotlight on Rockhampton	6
Brain Injury Celebrations	7
• Brain Injury Awareness Week Fundraising	
STEPS Christmas Party Date Claimer	8
STEPS Program Leader Network	8
STEPS Skills Programs in QLD Map	8

STEPS SKILLS PROGRAM REPORTS

Atherton

The first STEPS Program in Atherton celebrated finishing the course with a lovely lunch at Bridges Café at Walkamin- half way between Atherton and Mareeba.

The group have decided to meet there on the last Sunday of every month for lunch or just a coffee. It has an airconditioned (necessary in FNQ!), accessible venue, with beauti-

fully kept grounds to wander, including animals to see. It is also a tropical distillery which produces tropical wines and liqueurs.



Maroochydore

The most recent STEPS program to be held on the Sunshine Coast was held in May/ June 2013 with 8 participants attending. We are fortunate to have a new STEPS leader here on the coast who co-facilitated - the lovely Gill. Through the program not only did the participants learn from the exercises, they also learnt from each other. The group finished the

program with a breakup lunch at the Maroochy botanical gardens. One of the participants volunteered to cook a delicious Indian meal for everyone which was thoroughly enjoyed, while others brought additional food to be shared including wonderful cakes for dessert. Afterwards there was a walk through the botanical gardens.

inner strength and the willingness of spirit to move forward with your life despite the obstacles. I have learnt about making the most of what you have and taking strength from those around you. I have learnt about the importance of sharing experiences and information with each other and having a sense of humour if things go wrong. I have learnt about the value of participation and sharing. But mostly I have learnt about the human spirit; that despite your world being turned upside down there is that willingness and need to go on; to love; to laugh and to make a new future. I look forward to facilitating another series of STEPS workshops in 2013. I am sure there is still much for me to learn along with the new participants.
Angela



Edmonton

Here we all are celebrating the final day of our STEPS program at a lovely cafe at Holloways Beach. The program was run on the south-side of town but as we had north-siders attending we decided to have our break-up activity at a midway point. It was such a great program! People



were helping each other out in

more ways than one from the very first day and the bonds only became stronger week by week. We were privileged to witness time and again the power hidden in the stories when they come from the people who have had a brain injury themselves.

Gladstone

The Gladstone STEPS Skills Program started on 2 May, with Kelly and Jan (both community health nurses) at the helm. The leaders reflected that the group was very open about sharing their experiences right from the start of the group. Many of the participants commented that the program helped them realise that they are “not all by themselves” in the journey of life after a brain injury. The group finished the program with a

joint meeting with the local STEPS Network Group at the Gladstone Community Hub.

It was great to see so many people in attendance!



Young ABI—Buranda

The first STEPS Skills Program for young adults (aged 18-30



years) was held at the ABIOS offices from 6 May with Maria Hoogstrate and Marilyn Ginn as the leaders. There was a fantastic response for this group! Those who attended found that they were able to relate to each other and the unique chal-

poses for a young adult. Both leaders commented that the group “connected” in a very positive way as they spoke openly about their adjustment to a changed life after their injuries. The group has continued to meet since the completion of the initial 6-week course and there are plans for further “young ABI” groups in the future!

Rockhampton

The first 2013 STEPS Skills Program in Rockhampton started on 16 July with Allan McKernan and Sharon Beed leading the group.

The group took some time to settle in and feel comfortable to share their experiences. A couple of highlights for the group included the mindful breathing exercise in session 3 and the discussion about



weekly routines. The group opted for lunch at the Brunswick Hotel for the week 6 activity and have now been invited to join the monthly Rocky Brain Waves Group.

routines in session 4. Many in the group were able to share how they use their smart phones to help with organising their daily and



Robina

The second 2013 STEPS Program on the Gold Coast started on 1 July with Linda Shaw and Marty Westguard as the leaders. There was plenty of discussion around the table as the group opened up about their experiences.

The highlight for the Robina group was the week 6 activity. From very early in the program, the group decided that they wanted to do a boat cruise along the canals of the Gold Coast. After

planning (including providing wheelchair dimensions to the cruise company), the group



enjoyed fantastic weather as they saw the sights of the Gold Coast canals! The group

even filmed a short video of their experience on the cruise. All participants have been invited to join the existing Gold Coast STEPS Network Group.

Mackay

It was great to get another STEPS Skills Program up and running in Mackay on 17 July with Melissa and Tina from Blue Care Galaxy Mackay as the leaders. This was the first group in about 2 years in Mackay! The momentum for the group was generated earlier in the year by the brain injury community forum that was hosted by the local Headway Mackay Group. From week 1, the STEPS Program



DVD got the group talking about what their injury meant for them. The group also enjoyed the mindful breathing exercise! The week 6 activity was held at the Harbour in Mackay,

where the group enjoyed fish and chips and a walk along the foreshore. Planning has already started for the next course in Mackay!

STEPS NETWORK GROUP REPORTS

Logan / Ipswich combined

Earlier this year, the Logan and Ipswich STEPS Network Groups held a joint meeting at the Greenbank RSL. As the hosts, the Logan group made sure the venue and arrangements for the day were all organised. The Ipswich



group worked together to car pool so that everyone could enjoy the day out! A great



time was had by all with over 45 people in attendance. Ipswich STEPS Network Group has offered to return the favour at some stage in the future! The joint meeting was a good way to meet some new faces and share ideas about STEPS Group meetings in the Logan and Ipswich areas.

Bundaberg / Fraser Coast Hinterland combined

What a wonderful day was had by all at the first combined Bundaberg and Fraser Coast hinterland STEPS Network Group meeting in July!



A picture paints a thousand words.... twenty-one people from around the region travelled to Childers, spilling out of

the Drunk Bean Café into the winter sun of the courtyard. New connections and renewal of old links alike occurred on the day. The Maryborough group continued



onto lunch afterwards – needless to say, not many people needed dinner that night! Many thanks to Jennie and Leanne for organising the gathering!

Bayside–Casuarina Lodge

Over the past couple of years, the STEPS Program has formed a partnership with Casuarina Lodge in the Bayside area of Brisbane. Casuarina Lodge was established as a slow stream rehabilitation facility for adults who have experienced a severe brain injury. The partnership has proven to be very successful with many friendships and connections forming

between participants over the years. Recently, Casuarina Lodge underwent a name change (to Casuarina Rehabilitation Centre - CRC) and rolled out a new model of care. The Bayside STEPS Network Group was invited to take a look around the centre in July. The group was also able to provide direct feedback to staff about the centre and



the new model of care. The staff at the CRC even put on a BBQ lunch for the group to enjoy!

Trip to Central Qld

Over the past couple of years, the STEPS Program has gained a stronger presence in the Central Queensland region. There are now 4 STEPS Network Groups in the area –

over 12 months. While some of the group's are smaller in numbers, they are

drotherapy pool in Biloela. In July, Ben Turner (STEPS Program Co-ordinator) visited both the Rocky and Yeppoon



Rocky, Gladstone, Yeppoon and Biloela. Each of these groups has been running for

Biloela quite active in their respective communities. For example, the STEPS Group recently put together a proposal to the local council for a hy-



STEPS Network Groups – it was great to see the friendships that have formed and the support that the group's offer to those who attend! The plan for the future is to help the group's grow over time.

SPOTLIGHT ON... ROCKHAMPTON

What is the true story of the ghosts of Rockhampton? What could be a more interesting goose bumping experience than a Ghost tour around the city. Apparently Legend has it; there is plenty of activity in some of the elegant old buildings around town.

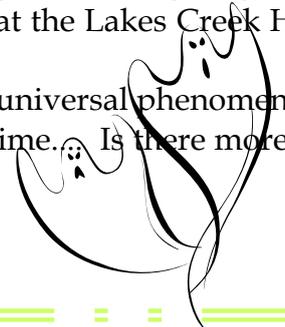
Scepticism about the afterlife is common, but we retain an intriguing curiosity about ghosts and the spirit world, whether we find them fascinating, horrifying or comforting, there is no doubt that ghosts have kept our interest for centuries.

The Criterion Hotel, with its beautiful shaded verandahs overlooking the Fitzroy River, was built in 1889, on the site of the first inn in the district built in 1857, has reportedly the ghost of a woman wearing a long, old-fashioned dress with lace-up boots and hair coiffed on top of her head, seen wandering the hallways and bedrooms!. Could she really be the chambermaid who committed suicide in the servants' quarters after being jilted by her lover, or is it Mrs Parker, a former owner of the hotel who decided not to leave but would rather enjoy the charm of the hotel?

Also at the Rockhampton Club, it is reported Peter Reese Jones, who died in his sleep at age fifty in the 1928 heatwave, roams around the corridors, keeping in touch with his mates! Then again we have another male ghost who appears at the Walter Reid Cultural Centre who has been seen many times. The identity of the elegantly dressed man is very much a mystery, but aren't they all? Not to be outdone; there have been sightings of ghosts at the Lakes Creek Hotel and wait for it..... Rockhampton Girls' Grammar School.

The afterlife and the spirit world are a source of fascination; ghosts are a universal phenomenon that is shared across a range of different cultures since the beginning of time... Is there more to be learned from these spirits, are there more around?

Spooks or no Spooks, we'll leave it to you to delve into...



STEPS PROGRAM CELEBRATIONS

Brain Injury Awareness Week Fundraising

Earlier this year, the STEPS Program was invited to send the **first Queensland group** to do the 7-day Potential Unlimited Program, a specially-designed Outward Bound Adventure Program for adults with brain injury, in Canberra in October 2013. The program combines a range of challenging outdoor activities (e.g., camping, hiking, abseiling, caving, etc.) with personal goal setting and group support to help people with brain injury to achieve their potential. As part of our preparations, many STEPS Networks Groups got behind our fundraising efforts. The Ipswich, Brisbane and Yeppoon STEPS Network Group's all held BBQ's to raise funds, the Bayside and Mt Gravatt STEPS Group hosted stalls in local shopping centres and ran a raffle, the Logan STEPS Group passed around the hat at one of their group meetings, and many others promoted our fundraising web page via their networks to seek for donations. The Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service (ABIOS) and the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit (BIRU) also showed their support by hosting fundraising morning teas. Collectively, the combined efforts of many (including STEPS Network Groups, leaders and participants) have helped us raise in excess of \$7000 for the trip! In doing so, we've helped raise awareness of brain injury in the community and raised the profile of the STEPS Program in many areas!



STEPS CHRISTMAS PARTY DATE CLAIMER

Wednesday, 6 December, 10am-12 noon

STEPS Greater Brisbane Christmas Party

Remember this date! Enter it into your phone or write it in your diary. This is the date for the STEPS Program Christmas Party 2013!

But I don't live in/ near Brisbane.. What about me?

We value you! Lock in the date, wherever you are! If you want to travel to Brisbane for the party you are most welcome to attend (unfortunately we can't fund any of your travel costs).

Otherwise, it would be wonderful if STEPS Program Network Groups around Queensland could all be celebrating the end of the year in their local communities at the same time. You might meet in a park or a café, or have some fun at your usual meeting place with some Christmas activities... it is up to you!

If you let us know before the day, we can share your event news with everyone at the party in Brisbane—we'll be connected through the power of communication and shared participation... Now THAT'S the spirit of STEPS.

When: Wednesday 6 December

Time: 10:00am- 12noon for morning tea

Where: Frangipani Court,, Roma St Parkland, Brisbane

Getting There: Train or car are the best options. It is a flat, 200m walk from Roma St train station.

Parking: Free for disability parking permit holders; regular parking is \$4.20 per hour

Catering: Sausage sizzle, morning tea and cold refreshments will be provided by STEPS

Wet Weather Plans: If we have to relocate the event due to rain, it will be held at an indoor venue close to ABIOS office at Buranda. Exact details TBA closer to the date.

STEPS SKILLS PROGRAM IN QLD MAP

2012 - Bundaberg, Cairns North, Edmonton (Cairns), Gladstone (2), Gold Coast, Ipswich, Kingaroy, Maroochy-dore, Redcliffe, Rockhampton, Yeppoon, Toowoomba (2), Beenleigh, Brighton, Buranda, Capalaba, Cherside, Logan Central, Mt Gravatt,, Newstead, Tarragindi

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

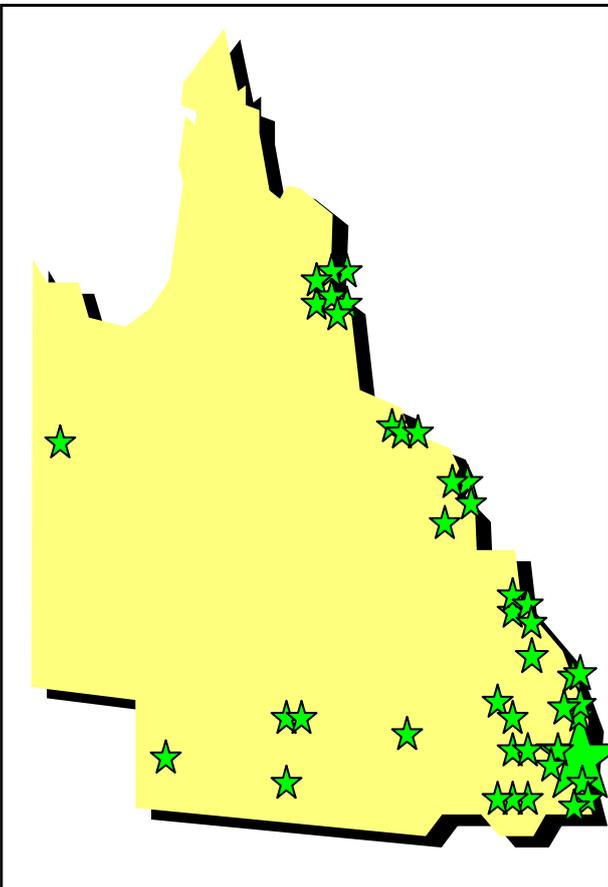
2010 - Mt Isa, Warwick, Rockhampton, Cairns (2), Mackay, Townsville, Kingaroy, Yarraman, Gold Coast (2), Beaudesert, Toowoomba (2), Brisbane (13)

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

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

2007 - Gold Coast, Rockhampton (2), Bundaberg, Roma, Cairns (2), Charleville (2), Innisfail, Brisbane (6)

2006 - Maroochy-dore, Caloundra, Gold Coast, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Brisbane (4)



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