

# SKILLS TO ENABLE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

## STEPS PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

*From the Manager,*

As we reach the end of another year of the STEPS Program in Queensland, I reflect on some of our key activities for 2012– see the article below on this page.

In this edition, we also have our usual wrap of site reports, both from our STEPS Skills Programs and our Network Groups. In 2012, 23 STEPS Skills Programs were offered in communities around Queensland. We also had 24 active Network Groups, mostly meeting monthly and all with a particular focus that suits local members' needs.

None of these programs could be managed without our stunning group of dedicated STEPS Program leaders. A magnificent and talented group of people, all with a passion for improving community life for people affected by brain injury.

Thanks to ABIOS for its ongoing support throughout 2012 and, of course, STEPS Program staff. Special mention must be made of Ben Turner and his unwavering commitment to the STEPS Program and, in particular, his perseverance in getting the STEPS Program established in central Queensland this year. Well done, Ben! Merry Christmas and a safe and happy festive season to you all.

*Aneti*

## Reflections On 2012

Earlier in 2012, the STEPS Program established its 3 key priorities for 2012. Here are some highlights for each of the areas for the year:

**1. FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY OF STEPS PROGRAM ONGOING NETWORK GROUP ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT QUEENSLAND,** aiming to best support our leaders so they could then support their local group members. We now have 24 STEPS Network Groups, including several in regional and rural locations, so that now, approx 250 people are gathering together in these local community groups on a monthly basis.

The focus is not always about ever-increasing numbers, but responding to the needs and goals of people who attend Network Groups. Some groups have increased their emphasis on brain injury education, holding specific sessions on topics of interest to their group; other groups have had a focus on raising awareness in the community of brain injury, most notably during Brain Injury Awareness Week; and yet others have expanded their community activities in bold ways.

**2. EXPLORE FEASIBILITY OF VIDEO/ ONLINE FORMATS FOR STEPS PROGRAM LEADER NETWORKING ACTIVITIES.** In September, we hosted our first in-home videoconference with some STEPS Program leaders. Though we had significant problems with connectivity reliability for home PC-based users, we now better understand some of the constraints and will keep working on this in 2013.

**3. FINALISE, PRESENT AND PUBLISH RESEARCH PROJECT FINDINGS EXAMINING THE TRAINING AND SUPPORT NEEDS OF STEPS PROGRAM LEADERS.** The 2011 Leader training forum research results were presented by Ben at the World Congress of Neurorehabilitation in Melbourne in May. The STEPS Program also featured in a new, international publication, *“Casebook of Exemplary Evidence-Informed Programs that Foster Community Participation After Acquired Brain Injury”*, which showcases case examples of community participation after ABI, published by the University of Toronto, Canada.

### STEPS Program

Issue 28

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#### Special Points of Interest:

☉ Reflection on 2012

☉ Regional & Rural STEPS Program

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# STEPS Skills Program Reports

## Brighton

The Brighton STEPS Skills Program commenced on 2 August, led by Meriel Stanger (Peer Leader) and Vicki Anderson (All About Living), at the All About Living Activities Centre in Brighton. There were 6 Participants, 4 of whom were from Residential Rehabilitation facilities, all supported by workers. This posed some issues for the group, as these participants were reliant on Maxi-Taxis for transport and were often late in arriving. All six participants attended regularly throughout the program. The group benefited from sharing their experiences and one participant stated that they would like to attend the next program offered in Brighton area. Planning for the group break-up function proved to be a challenge as there were 4 wheelchairs in the group, 2 electric. This required some research by the group to find a venue that was wheelchair accessible and reasonably priced. A number of options were

discussed, however they were dismissed because of the difficulties getting electric wheelchairs into the venue. The final choice was lunch at the Bracken Ridge Tavern. The Manager and Staff at the Tavern were very helpful and moved tables and chairs etc. around to accommodate the group. One participant required a special diet which the Staff were happy to provide. Despite some transport issues all seemed to enjoy the activity. **Vicki Anderson**

## Bundaberg

This was the second time we had been co-facilitators so it was with confidence and enthusiasm that we welcomed 10 participants to the Bundaberg STEPS Program in

August, most of whom were stroke survivors. The group shared personal experiences during the introductions and were interested to hear what the STEPS Program was offering them. We shared co-leader duties, with Gabby reading workbook content and Jennie activating the group activities and discussions. We identified one member who was

unable to read proficiently and was having difficulties understanding and recording answers in the workbook. Jennie arranged for the Ozcare Speech Pathologist to assist him each week with verbalising and recording information. This strategy proved successful and kept the group dynamics even and the sessions on track. Jennie was able to give first hand advice on the local Ozcare exercise program which kick started one person's rehabilitation process.

The participants agreed that the program had a positive influence on their health and well-being and gave them more support for a positive outcome in the future. We celebrated Week 6 with lunch at the Botanic Gardens. Three members have joined the local Brain Injury Friends (STEPS) Support Group.

**Jennie Whitley:** Social Worker / Ozcare Wide Bay Region Co-ordinator

**Gabby Walker :** Trained Volunteer Leader

## Maroochydore

This program began in October with 13 people, including supporters, attending the Millwell Road Community Centre. It was facilitated by Angela Pope (Red Cross), supported by Marlene Dearden and Gillian Hall. A big thank you to both of these ladies for their support.

Over several weeks the group came together really well as people began to feel more comfortable and got to know each other better. It was a great opportunity for people to

connect with others and to share experiences and ideas. The content of the program also provided an opportunity for people to reflect and make goals for the future.

Although there were suggestions of go- carting and fishing, the final break up activity was a BBQ at Cotton Tree park and everyone brought their own lunch. This turned out to be a very festive affair due to one member also bringing along decorations and plates of nibbles for everyone to share.

This new group have decided to join the existing Maroochydore STEPS network group. A meet and greet morning tea will be held in February 2013 to decide how the larger group will move forward.

**Angela**



## Newstead

The Newstead STEPS Skills Program was led by Jane Maccormac (Footprints) and Jane Dufficy (Peer Leader) and commenced on Monday 29 October. Unfortunately, Jane Dufficy was unwell and missed a few sessions, but the group appreciated her input when she was able to be there. The two Jane's have vowed to team up again in 2013! While the group was small, the leaders commented that it was great to see the progress of participants from week-to-week. One member commented: "I found the program very helpful and enjoyable. I learnt a lot from the other participants about ABI as

well as some handy tips from the book." The group had a great time for their week 6 activity at a local café – so much so that they have already planned a return trip in the New Year to "catch-up" once again and make some plans as a group for the future.

## Capalaba



The Capalaba STEPS Skills Program started on 4 September with the ever-reliable and experienced team of Denice

Rundle (Peer Leader) and Lynne Everett (Balmoral Uniting Community Centre) as leaders. As is usual for Bayside groups, attendance was quite high with the group averaging over 12 participants throughout the program. The numbers included residents of Casuarina Lodge (a local ABI rehabilitation centre). The group enjoyed exploring the

various topics in the STEPS Program Workbook and most importantly, they enjoyed the connecting with each other through the sharing of their stories of life after ABI. The group finished with a buffet lunch at the Redlands Sporting Club. All group members have been invited to join the existing Bayside STEPS Network Group.

## Gladstone

The 2<sup>nd</sup> STEPS Skills Program in Gladstone for 2012 started on Thursday 6 September and was held at the Gladstone Community Advisory Service. Kelly Murray (local community nurse) led this group with the support of one of her colleagues, Jan Guerassimoff. The group really highlighted how and why the STEPS Program can make a big difference for people living in

regional locations, e.g. through the sharing of information among group members, one participant was able to find out where she could go for a review assessment and was able to finally speak to health professionals about her progress. The leaders commented that there was always plenty of discussion within the group as participants reflected on their

journey and shared useful tips and information. The group finished with morning tea at the local botanical gardens and have since joined with the participants from the group held earlier in 2012 to form the Gladstone STEPS Network Group, which is a big achievement. It will provide a great source of support for people with brain injury and their

## Buranda

This STEPS Skills Program, led by Maria Hoogstrate and Marilyn Ginn (both experienced Peer Leaders), commenced on 17 October at the ABIOS Offices. While the group was diverse in terms of the age of participants and injury factors (e.g., cause of injury and time post-injury), the leaders commented there was a strong connection among group members from very early in the program. As experienced leaders,

Maria and Marilyn worked in depth with the group to explore the issues of psychological adjustment, relationships, and the importance of remaining active in the community. The group was also fortunate to have the support of an OT student, Kevin, on placement with ABIOS. Kevin was able to impart of some of the knowledge he has gained at university about the brain and changes after brain

injury. The group finished with a morning tea at the café on top of the Kangaroo Point Cliffs – the view of the city was fantastic! All group members have been invited to join with the Brisbane Central STEPS Network Group.



# STEPS Skills Program Reports cont.

## Kingaroy

For a while there we weren't sure whether the Kingaroy STEPS Skills Program would get off the ground but as we should know referrals came in at the last minute. Each week we had a different number of people and we weren't sure who was going to turn up. But every week we had a great discussion and shared information with each other. Everyone in our group was very

supportive of each other.

The best part of the course was morning tea each week! The scrolls and twists from Brumby's were a weekly occurrence due to their popularity.

We were sad to see a committed member leave Kingaroy so close to the end, but it was for the best. He always had an interesting comment to

contribute and gave us a laugh.

The break up activity was a casual morning tea with great discussion that was very helpful to all. No games were needed to fill the time.

The participants are looking forward to joining the network group in the new year.

Bobbie D'Arcy

## Rockhampton

This STEPS Skills Program commenced on 4 September and was held at Centacare Rockhampton, led by Allan McKernan (Centacare) and Sharon Beed (Red Cross). Getting the group up and running was a big achievement in itself! Previous efforts to get a group running in 2011 and 2012 had to be postponed due to a lack of numbers. However, through the persistence and dedication of the local leaders,

the group got going with 11 participants and proved to be a big success. One of the participants commented: "[the group] helped point us in the right direction. It gave us some very useful tools to deal with the day-to-day of [our daughter's] recovery." The group held their week 6 activity at the local botanical gardens and have since formed the 'Rocky Brain Waves' group which meets on the first Tuesday of each month. The

group has big plans for the future, so keep watching the Network Group section of the newsletter to hear what the group gets up to in 2013.



# STEPS Network Groups

## Ipswich

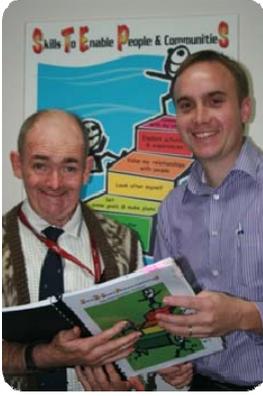
The Ipswich STEPS Network Group has had a focus throughout 2012 of raising awareness of ABI in the general community. Doug Stubbs, one of the group's local peer leaders, earlier in the year decided to approach the 98.9FM Breakfast Crew to talk on air about issues that impact the lives of people with ABI and their families. Recently, Doug featured for

the third time this year with Jamie Dunn on his radio show. Doug spoke openly about the risks of alcohol and other drugs and encouraged people to be mindful this holiday season to avoid harm or injury. Doug also provided the 98.9FM Breakfast Crew with a certificate of appreciation from the STEPS Program for promoting awareness of brain injury in the community.

Doug is an excellent advocate for brain injury and has been well received by the radio crew and its listeners. Thank-you Doug for your efforts to raise awareness!



## Forest Lake– Scott MacDonald AMAQ article



Earlier this year, Scott MacDonald (Peer Leader) approached the Australian Medical Association of Queensland (AMAQ) about promoting the Skills To Enable People and Communities (STEPS)

Program to medical practitioners in Queensland. From this, a feature article about the STEPS Program was published in the Doctor Q magazine November issue. This publication goes out to over 5,000 Doctors throughout Queensland. In the article, Scott highlighted that communication, relationships and social impacts of acquired brain injury often lag well behind physical recovery, which is how the STEPS Program comes into its own.

Scott, 55, is one of about 60 leaders statewide who truly understand the frustrations, stresses, embarrassment and

isolation people with ABI can face. The former accountant suffered a post-operative stroke in late 2009 and also has a history of brain tumour and epilepsy. “Sometimes I just can’t find the right words to say or get them out. It’s frustrating but it doesn’t mean I’m stupid,” says Scott, who experiences the communication disability, aphasia. “Every day in every way, I’m getting better and better.”

“I like that I’ve learnt to help others find their voice, not always vocally, but sometimes by drawing or charades.”

Thanks Scott for your efforts to promote the STEPS Program.

## Regional & Rural STEPS Program

And now for a bit of R ‘n’ R- Regional and Rural STEPS Program, that is!

As part of its statewide responsibilities, the STEPS Program is constantly striving to offer programs in regional and rural areas, especially those outside the south-eastern corner of Queensland. In 2012, the 6-week self-management based STEPS Skills Program will have been offered in 10 regional or rural sites, including Yeppoon, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, and Kingaroy. Two programs each will also have been offered in Gladstone, Cairns and Toowoomba in 2012.

Our partnerships with, and support and supervision of our trained, local leaders are vitally important in the delivery of these programs, as seen by the comments below:

“Thank you so very much for helping to get our STEPS Program up and running in Rockhampton. Allen and Sharyn (the leaders)

have been fantastic, the steps programme itself has been beneficial not only for [my daughter] but also myself. Allen has offered us his support and services to set up a support group for people with ABI and their Carers here in Rockhampton, everyone in the steps group are pretty excited about it”

“We have just completed the STEPS Program at Cairns North and found it really helpful and a good source of information. It really is a great way to get to know others who have had a similar injury and to find the best

way to cope. Your leaders Anne and Jenny, were excellent, very caring and compassionate and we cannot thank them enough.”

Ongoing, STEPS Network Groups also meet regularly- mostly monthly- in several regional and rural sites, including Bundaberg, Biloela, Cairns, Innisfail, Kingaroy, Mackay, Toowoomba, Townsville, Yarraman and Yeppoon. Our Fraser Coast hinterland group meets in Maryborough as a central meeting point, though none of its members actually live there! They all travel at least 30 minutes from north, south, east and west to the group, including the leader.

These groups offer opportunities for people with brain injury and their families to connect with each other on a regular basis and, importantly, improve their participation in their local community, wherever it is in Queensland.



# Upcoming STEPS Skills Programs & Leader Training for 2013

## Upcoming STEPS Skills Programs for 2013:

Robina- starting Monday 4 February  
Ipswich- starting Thursdays 7 February  
Browns Plains- starting Monday 11 February  
Gladstone- starting Thursday 11 April

*Contact Ben Turner for details on all the above groups.*

## Upcoming Leader Training for 2013:

Brisbane -10/11 April, 7/8 August, ABIOS office  
Far north Qld -March/April  
All other sites TBA

*Contact Ben Turner or Areti Kennedy for details on the above training, or if you are interested in training in your local community.*

## Open Network Groups

Here is the list of Network Groups are open to new members, places where they meet and the contact person for each of the groups.

### **Biloela- Ben Turner: Ph 3406 2311**

Monthly meetings, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month, Bluecare Biloela or as advised

### **Bundaberg (B.I.F (Brian Injury Friends)– Leanne Curtis: Ph 4155 2303 & Gabby Walker: Ph 0437 406 445 (Areti)**

Monthly meetings, 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of month, 10am– 12noon at various community locations.

### **Cairns (Wet STEPS fishing group)- Areti Kennedy: Ph 1300 727 403 or 3406 2311**

Monthly meetings, 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of month, Stratford Jetty, exact times TBA (dependent on tide)

### **Fraser Coast Hinterland Brain Injury Support Group- Jennie Whitley: Ph 4131 4258 (Areti Kennedy)**

Monthly meetings, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of month, various community locations

### **Gladstone– Ben Turner: Ph 1300 727 403**

Monthly meetings, 1st Thursday of month, various community venues.

### **Gold Coast– Ben Turner: 3406 2311**

Monthly meetings, last Tuesday of each month, various community venues.

### **Innisfail– Raylene McSwan: Ph 4063 3742 or 0437 972 587 (Areti Kennedy)**

Monthly meetings, 1st Thursday of month at Healthier Great Green Way, 180 Edith St, Innisfail

### **Ipswich– Ben Turner: Ph 3406 2311**

Monthly meetings, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of month, 10am-12noon at various community venues

### **Kingaroy– Bobbie D'Arcy: Ph 4162 9220 (Areti Kennedy)**

Monthly meetings, 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of month, 10am-12noon, Gloria Jean's cafe, Kingaroy Shopping World

### **Mackay– Anne Jennings: Ph 4968 3823 (Ben Turner)**

Monthly meetings, 1st Friday of month, from 12:30pm, CCRC, 25 Wellington Street, Mackay

### **Maroochydore- Areti Kennedy: Ph 1300 727403 or 3406 2311**

Monthly meetings, 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of month, 10am-12noon, various community locations

### **Rockhampton (Rocky Brain Waves)- Allan McKernan: Ph. 1300 523 985 or Sharon Beed: Ph 0400 965 424**

Monthly meetings, 1st Tuesday of month, various community venues

### **Toowoomba– Mary-Ann Garrahy: Ph 4030 1709 or 0409 592 863 (Areti Kennedy)**

Fortnightly meetings, 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of month at Sunset Superbowl, Green Wattle St. 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of month at various community locations 10:30am- 12:30pm

### **Townsville- Noel Ball: Ph 0408 151 932, Tina Ferriday: Ph 0407 750 731 (Areti Kennedy)**

Monthly meetings, 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of month, various community locations

### **Yarraman– Peter McLean: Ph 4163 8780 (Areti Kennedy)**

Monthly meetings, various community locations, contact coordinator directly for exact details.

### **Yeppoon- Jeff Lidden: Ph 0487 178 807 (Ben Turner)**

Monthly meetings, last Monday of month of each month, various community locations.

## Greater Brisbane:

**Acacia Ridge– David Firth: Ph 0411 501 641** (Areti Kennedy)

Weekly meetings, Mondays 10am-12noon, Acacia Ridge Community Centre, Hanify St, Acacia Ridge

**Bayside– Denice Rundle: Ph 3823 4851 & Ben Turner: Ph 3406 2311**

Monthly meetings, 2nd Thursday of each month at various local venues

**Brisbane Central– Ben Turner: Ph 3406 2311**

Monthly meetings, 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of month, 10am-12noon; venue alternates between ABIOS & community setting.

**Caboolture– Areti Kennedy: Ph 3406 2311**

Monthly meetings, 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of month, 10am- 12noon, at various community locations

**Forest Lake- Elaine Trotman: Ph 0438 818 235 & Ben Turner: 3406 2311**

Monthly meeting, last Tuesday of the month, 10am- 12noon at various local venues.

**Logan North– John Enright: Ph 3388 6056** (Ben Turner)

Monthly meetings, 1st Monday of month, at various community locations

**Mt Gravatt– Ty Hill: Ph 0401 317 643 & Areti Kennedy: Ph 3406 2311**

Fortnightly meetings, Wednesdays, 10am -12noon at Perks Café, Town Square Garden City shopping centre; alternating with community social outings at various locations

**Nundah- Areti Kennedy: Ph 3406 2311**

Monthly meetings, 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of month, 1:30- 3:30pm, various community locations

**Pine Rivers- Sue Wright: Ph 3406 2311**

Monthly meetings, 3rd Wednesday of month, 10am-12noon at Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre

**Redcliffe– Cherie Carter: Ph 3889 4711** (Areti Kennedy)

Monthly meetings, 2nd Wednesday of month, 10am-12noon at Redcliffe Leagues Club, cnr Klingner and Ashmore Rds, Redcliffe, or various community locations

## Spotlight on...Caboolture

Caboolture: half way between the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane, but still able to be called rural, Caboolture is the traditional home of the Kabi people. The name Caboolture is derived from the Kabi words *cabul-tur* meaning 'Place of the Carpet Snake'

Each year the Kabi people held Bunya Festivals in March to coincide with the Bunya Pines when the nuts are plentiful and ready to eat. There would be singing, dancing, story-telling and trading at the festivals and even arranging of marriages took place. Neighbouring clans were also invited to the festivals.

Caboolture was one of the first settlements around Brisbane to be opened to free white settlers. Local farmers experimented with sugar cane and cotton and in the 1860s Caboolture became a cotton-farming centre to help

relieve shortages made from the American Civil War. Today fruits and vegetables are grown and dairy and stud beef cattle are raised. At the end of the 1860s Caboolture became a trading centre for the miners travelling from Brisbane to the gold-fields in Gympie.

If you want to check out some of the local produce, the Caboolture markets are open every Sunday and host over 500 stalls! Everything from vegetables and herbs to craft and books are available to buy.

Other things to do in Caboolture include attending the Urban Country Music Festival, which is a 3 day festival in May focusing on concerts & activities embracing country music & the outback way. Visiting the Caboolture Historical Village to find out more about the history of Caboolture, the village holds



over 1000 authentic items! If you enjoy 4 wheel driving, visiting the Beerburum Forest is a must; and the Centenary Lakes park is a great place to have a picnic or just walk through the beautiful gardens along the Lake.

Caboolture is the hometown of country singer Keith Urban; although born in New Zealand, Keith moved to Caboolture when he was two-years-old. Andrew Lofthouse, a Channel 9 news presenter, is also from Caboolture.

<http://www.moretonbay.qld.gov.au/general>

<http://www.britannica.com>

<http://www.urbancountry.com.au>

# Leader Network

2013 DATE CLAIMER 1- Attention all STEPS Program leaders! Save the date! Our first STEPS Program Leader Network teleconference for 2013 will be held on Thursday 7 February from 10-11am. We will review the STEPS Program 2012 and plan the schedule for 2013 Leader Network activities, but the highlight will be a presentation of our service evaluation data from 2009- currently. Usual dial-in procedures apply, which we will email closer to the date in 2013.

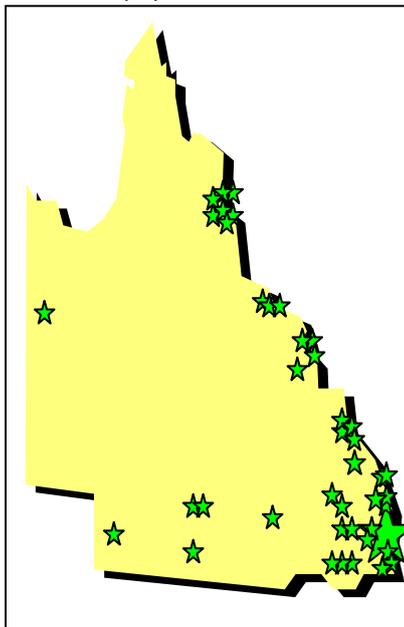
2013 DATE CLAIMER 2- We are proud to be rolling-out our new, revised STEPS Skills Program workbook. We are offering two training sessions to orientate leaders to the new workbook:

**Greater Brisbane-** Friday 1 March, 9am- 1pm, ABIOS office, Centro Buranda shopping centre

**Other Queensland-** Friday 8 March, 9-11am, training via teleconference (RSVPs will need to be received by Thursday 28 February, to allow postage of resources to trainees). Further details and flyers will be circulated in early 2013.

## STEPS Skills Programs in QLD Map

### ★ STEPS Skills Program



**2006** - Maroochydore, Caloundra, Gold Coast, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Brisbane (4)

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

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

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

**2010** - Warwick, Buranda, Rockhampton, Cairns (2), Mt Gravatt (2), Ipswich, New Farm, Logan north(2), Beaudesert, Pine Rivers, Mackay, Bulimba, Gold Coast (2), Toowoomba (2), Townsville, Kingaroy, Yarraman, Wynnum, Ipswich, Zillmere, Mt Isa, Stafford

**2011** - Biloela, Browns Plains, Bundaberg, Buranda (2), Capalaba, Cairns (2), Gold Coast (2), Forest Lake, Ipswich, Townsville (2), Logan North (2), Maroochydore, Maryborough, Morningside, Nundah, Rockhampton (2), Townsville, Browns Plains, Yeppoon, Biloela, Newstead, Noosaville, Caboolture

## Christmas Parties

November/December is a busy time for STEPS wrapping up Network Groups with their end of year meetings and Christmas parties. We finally enjoyed some sunny, though hot, weather for our combined Brisbane Christmas Party at Roma St Parkland. The combined Far North Queensland Christmas Party, which Areti was able to attend in Cairns this year was held in air-conditioned comfort. Our other sites enjoyed gatherings in various locations, many opting to share some Christmas cheer with Secret Santa gift exchanges.

Keep on the look out for the March 2013 edition to read all about the Christmas Parties.

Seasons Greetings from all at the STEPS Program, have a safe and happy holiday.

### CONTACT DETAILS

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[www.health.qld.gov.au/abios](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/abios)