

# SKILLS TO ENABLE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

## NEWSLETTER

June 2007

Issue 6

**WELCOME** to the mid year issue of the STEPS Newsletter for 2007. In this issue we will update you on the various groups, which includes exciting news about the STEPS program reaching rural and remote areas of Queensland.

There are also some tips on managing pain and discomfort and information about working successfully with health care providers.



**Please remember** to think about submitting a **READER CONTRIBUTION**. We welcome

any stories or information that you might like to share. Readers contributions should include your name and address for verification, but can be published anonymously if you wish. Just let us know what you want us to do, when you send in the contribution.

We reserve the right to edit or refuse unsuitable material. We are unable to return material submitted, so please do not send originals or items of value you wish to keep.

### STEPS Group Updates

In this issue we have news about new groups starting and places where a second group is planned or running.

Following Leader Training in April a STEPS group program started in Charleville on April 10<sup>th</sup> run by Sheree, Dale, Annie and Wendy and attended by 2 participants. Read more about this group in a later section – STEPS in Charleville.

In Bundaberg, Nene Buckland and Meg Temple are running a second STEPS group, which started on 15<sup>th</sup> May for 15+ participants! In Bracken Ridge, Meriel Stanger and Bayside

Community Options are in the planning stage for organising their second group.

In Rockhampton, a group of leaders working in the local hospital plan to run a STEPS Group Program 4 times per year, as part of their rehabilitation program. Annette Horton and Trevor Davis ran the first group which finished at the end of March. Since then, planning has been completed to include another staff member, Sarah Brennan, and run groups in May, August and November. 

As far as we are aware, this is the first time the STEPS Group Program has been incorporated in a larger health rehabilitation program and we are thrilled to see this application taking shape. Thank you Annette, Trevor and Sarah for your commitment and enthusiasm.

### Leader Training



Leader Training has recently taken place in April in two locations in Far North Queensland – Innisfail and Cairns, following courses earlier in the year in Brisbane, Charleville and Roma.

3 peer leaders attended training in Innisfail and 11 people (8 service providers and 3 volunteers) attended the course in Smithfield, Cairns.

### STEPS CONTACT DETAILS

#### STEPS Program

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# Pain and Discomfort



Many people experience pain or altered sensation after stroke or brain injury. Specific problems might include: not being able to feel anything or “numbness”, less able to feel touch, less able to feel the difference between hot and cold or less able to feel pain. You might also experience pain due to:

- specific physical problems, e.g. limited shoulder movement, headaches
- poor sleep
- stress
- emotions such as depression, anxiety, frustration, etc.

If you experience pain, you should ask your health care provider for specific ideas about pain-killing medication for your situation.

Some other strategies people use to manage pain include:

- Heat or cold applied to the painful area
- Massage
- Exercise
- Breathing and relaxation- specific breathing techniques such as deep breathing
- Acupuncture- this traditional Chinese medicine technique involves inserting small needles into particular points on the skin
- Meditation
- Relaxation techniques- such as muscle relaxation
- TENS (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation)- a tiny electrical current is passed through the skin via electrodes to trigger a pain-killing response from the body
- Cognitive therapy- to help change the way you think, feel and behave about pain

## Chronic Pain

Dealing with chronic pain that cannot be relieved is difficult. Some ideas that might help include:

- Accept you have chronic pain. It may not go away and you may have times when it flares up or worsens. Work out ways to deal with this.
- Do things to stop the pain getting you down, e.g. talking to a friend, seeking professional help
- Get active, eat well and rest adequately
- Try not to let the pain dictate your whole life. You might still be able to do many of the things you enjoy, but in a modified way, e.g. playing with children
- Find some fun things to do that don't worsen your pain
- If painkillers aren't working, see your doctor

## STEPS in Charleville

A STEPS group was held in Charleville in April/May with great results. The group was attended by 3 participants and 2 carers. The group was lead by 4 community members on a rotation from various local organisations. These presenters were Sheree, Dale, Annie and Wendy - a big thank you to you all! This group is the first of its kind in the Charleville area.

Some thoughts from 2 of the participants:

“The first meeting I found it hard to talk about the stroke and its effect on me, however by the 2<sup>nd</sup> week I found it much easier. In particular, I liked the video showing the brain and how having a stroke in a particular area of the brain can have different effects on the bodies functioning. It helped me to understand my stroke and where my bleed was. Also, it was nice to know that I was not alone.”

“I found the group very friendly; it was good to be able to talk about my stroke and to have people understand how I felt especially at the time of my stroke. And I realise I am not alone and that there is help for people that have had a stroke.”

The group have decided to continue to meet bi monthly at Blue Care on a Tuesday from 2pm-4pm, starting on the 17<sup>th</sup> July. For more information, please contact Wendy Wondrock Ph: 4650 5180.



Harold (Happy) Okeefe, Sherree Clare, Flo Okeefe, Wendy Wondrock and Eileen Kiely.



Back Row: Dale Wood, Annie Liston  
Front row: Flo Okeefe and Eileen Kiely



***SPOTLIGHT ON...***

## ***Roma.***

Roma is a vibrant rural town surrounded by cattle and sheep farms. Situated at the crossroads of the Warrego and Carnarvon Highways, Roma is home to the Big Rig, Australia's living History of Oil and Gas Exploration. The town was the site of Australia's early oil and natural gas search in the 1920s.

It has fine civic amenities including a hospital, racecourse, Olympic swimming pool and TAFE College.

A tribute to Roma's oil and gas industry, which began in 1900, is **The Big Rig**, an old oil derrick on the outskirts of Roma.

As Roma's major tourist attraction, the complex features two historic oilrigs, the oldest being the US-built EMSCO rig, a café, souvenir shop, a museum housing educational and informational displays, as well as an information centre.

In March, six service providers from 4 major centres – Roma, Kingaroy, Dalby and Goondiwindi, attended leader training in Roma. Watch out for news about STEPS Group Programs being run by the wonderful people who attended this course.



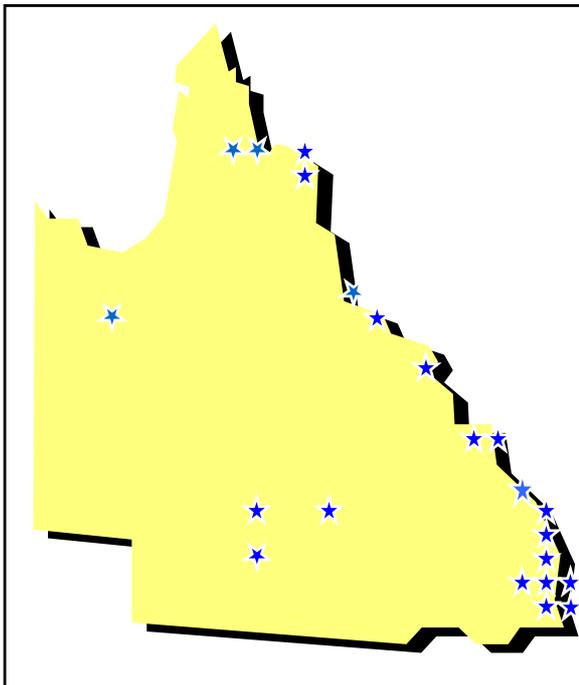
### FAST FACTS

Did you know?..... Roma sells more beef cattle in a year than Rockhampton – or so we City Slickers are told by the people of Roma!



## STEPS Groups in Queensland

Here's a snapshot of where STEPS is happening in Queensland at the moment.



### 2007 Leader Training:

Brisbane x 2, Roma, Charleville, Cairns, Innisfail

**Other sites in development:** Townsville – Leader Training scheduled for July, Cunnamulla, Hervey Bay, Mt Isa

### Established Groups

Maroochydore, Caloundra, Buranda, Cleveland, Gold Coast, Bundaberg, Capalaba, Mackay, Annerley

### New 2007 Groups

Gold Coast, Bracken Ridge x 2, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Charleville x 2, Mossman – planned for June, Cairns – planned for July, Port Douglas – planned for September

## Group Activities

In Session 4 of the STEPS Group Program we discussed working with services and how important it is to feel comfortable with your health care providers and to feel that they understand your situation. The group was encouraged to view their relationship with their providers as a partnership, not “us/them”. Remember to tell them:

- What the problem means *to you*
- What your goals for your health are
- What role you want to have, and
- If you think you won't or can't follow their advice

Often this will involve preparing carefully for an appointment – writing down questions or arranging for someone to accompany you – and recording what your doctor or health worker says to you. You may choose to write down information or ask for printed material on the topic.

In this issue we have included information about pain and discomfort. The above advice may be very relevant for working with your health care provider in tackling this very personal and often debilitating issue

## Support Group Stories

In this issue, we are including a new section about the achievements of other support groups around the country (not necessarily those that have been generated by a STEPS program).

*Boroondara Stroke Support Group are based in Melbourne. As well as regular meetings, they have produced a number of resources to support people who have had a stroke. These include:*

- A Stroke Recovery DVD
- Website – [www.bssg.org.au](http://www.bssg.org.au)
- 3 different health and fitness programs
- Aphasia Cell – a specific group for people coping with aphasia
- Brochures, newsletters and a publication, “A Guide to Services for Stroke Survivors and Carers in the City of Boroondara”