

# STEPS PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

## SKILLS TO ENABLE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

### From the Manager,

Spring is here! This season brings the hope of new growth, of new possibilities, of potential waiting to be realized. We have all of these things, and more, in this edition. From the site reports for Skills Programs and Network Groups, to Brain Injury Awareness Week activities, to readers' community successes, to some exciting service opportunities—it's all here...with just enough time to start thinking about some end-of-year Christmas celebrations (on the back page). Happy reading...

*Areti*



Queensland  
Government

Princess Alexandra Hospital  
Metro South Health

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### Special points of interest:

- ☺ Brain Injury Awareness Week
- ☺ Reader Contribution—It Pays to be Consistent
- ☺ A Facebook page for Carers

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## BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS WEEK

Brain Injury Awareness Week 2014 was held from Monday 11 to Sunday 17 August.

The STEPS Program celebrated this event by supporting our Network Groups around Queensland with local celebrations during the week. BBQs were a popular choice for Townsville, Rockhampton, Gladstone and Yeppoon, while Maroochydore and Fraser Coast hinterland enjoyed celebratory morning teas. Some groups added a fundraising element to their events, while others solely focussed on community awareness-raising, and yet others simply enjoyed being part of an important event for brain injury. In Yeppoon, the daughters of our local family member peer leader, Joanne Emery, also gave special presentations about brain injury to their girl guides group and their local school—well done girls!

In the greater Brisbane area, the STEPS Program partnered with Bayside Sailability to offer a morning of sailing. Over 50 people sailed, choosing either a 2-person 'Access 303' sailing dinghy or the 7.4m Payne yacht 'Faith' for a 45-60 minute sail around Moreton Bay. Network Group members came from Toowoomba, Ipswich, Caboolture, Redcliffe/North Lakes, Brisbane north, Brisbane central, Browns Plains, Centenary, Mt Gravatt and Young ABI. The event was organised by some of our peer leaders, as part of their Stage 3 efforts of the Outward Bound Potential Unlimited Program.

Local Network Group members also continued to support the national Bang on a Beanie campaign, including posting pictures of themselves wearing their beanies on the Selfie-less Wall. See [www.bangonabeanie.com.au](http://www.bangonabeanie.com.au).

Finally, the STEPS Program invited Network Group members along to the 'Brain Injury Gig- BIG', hosted by local disability support service, Open Minds, in Brisbane. A relaxing afternoon of music, ranging from rock to pop to blues was enjoyed by all. The STEPS Program also manned a stall in the Education Room area, and some of our members had a happy snap taken with the event mascot.



# STEPS SKILLS PROGRAM REPORTS

## Townsville

The Townsville STEPS program was held at Community rehabilitation nQ over 6 weeks between 16 May until 20 June. This was the second STEPS program run at the new neurological rehabilitation venue. The leaders Tanya Ashton (Social worker) and Kate Contos (Occupational therapist) along with a social work student and an occupational therapy student who enjoyed assisting with leading the activities

and facilitating discussion. The 4 participants each brought a



different element to the group discussions. There was a large sharing of information and strategies and a lot of playfulness and jolly interactions amongst the group. In week 6 the group decided to have a barbeque down at The Rockpool on the Strand as our break up activity. Each participant contributed and the group ended up having an array of meats and salads which was enjoyed whilst admiring the amazing view.

## Yeppoon

It was way back in February 2012 that the last STEPS Skills Program



was held in Yeppoon, so it was great to get another group up and running. The program started on 14 July with Marilyn and Jenne (from the local hospital) working alongside Joanne Emery (family member peer leader). Marilyn, Jenne and Jo have played an important role in keeping the local Yeppoon STEPS Network Group going over the past few years. While the skills program was small in numbers, the group found the experience very beneficial to go

through the various topics in the STEPS Program workbook. The group particularly enjoyed the 'traffic light' activity (session 2) and the deep breathing exercise (session 3). The group finished with a combined BBQ in the park with the members of the Yeppoon STEPS Network Group. The group also got behind the fundraising sausage sizzle that was organised by the Network Group during Brain Injury Awareness Week.

## Robina

The first 2014 STEPS Skills Program on the Gold Coast started on 23 June at the Robina Health Precinct (just opposite the Robina Hospital). The group leaders were Linda (Allied Health Assistant) along with Marty and Annette (peer leaders). Several group participants admitted that they were not too sure about going along for the first week. However, they quickly found they felt comfortable in the group. The leaders commented that there were a lot of "aha" moments. All participants reflected that they really enjoyed meeting others who had experienced a brain injury and

sharing experiences within the group. Friendships were formed that have continued outside of the group! The group held their week 6 activity by the beach at the Burleigh Heads Surf Life Saving Club – there couldn't

be a nicer place to enjoy catching up with friends over coffee! Everyone in the group has now been invited to join the monthly Gold Coast STEPS Network Group.



## Hervey Bay written by Jennie Whitley

The Hervey Bay STEPS Skills Program was all about challenge and going with the flow! After unexpected leave of the original STEPS leader, I stepped in from Bundaberg to deliver the very first Hervey Bay program offered in. As unorganised as I thought I was, and after getting lost on my way (as I'd never been to the venue), the first session was a success! Thursday 29 May, saw 8 smiling faces around the table in the HUGE hall allocated to us at the Community Centre – we had the large room because we needed a television.

After this first week, we were moved into a more cosy room in the centre, which also came with challenges as we had to ensure that one of the participants who used a wheelchair had the seat at the door, as the wheelchair would not fit around the tables to get anywhere

else in the room!

We were once again faced with challenge and change in week 5 as we were moved to yet another room, which ended up being the best room in the place! It had 2 window walls looking out onto luscious green grass next to a pond filled with ducks! - let's just say we spent a lot of week 5 being mesmerised by the view!

Our participants came from Hervey Bay and Maryborough and myself travelling from Bundaberg. Some weeks we were challenged to start on time due to those of us who were travelling distances. Road works often caused delays! Fortunately we were a chatty group and those early arrivals were happy to socialise while we waited for the latecomers.

We spent considerable time pondering our week 6 event before finally

deciding on fish and chips in a lovely park overlooking the beach in Hervey Bay. Week 6 happened to be school holidays so we were uncertain as to how busy the park would be. Fortunately we found a beautiful spot near the water, under cover and away from the playground. Some participants brought their furry companions and we were all entertained by the antics of 2 beautiful dogs! All participants were then invited to join the Fraser Coast Hinterland Brain Injury Support Group which meets monthly in Maryborough.



## Cooroy written by Tammie Gibbie

Getting together with a group of people you don't know can be terrifying. I found this to be when I was signed up with the STEPS Program in July at Cooroy.

Once I arrived I was soon put at ease with friendly smiling faces that all seemed to be a little hesitant

about coming to the program. After introductions and a brief description of our injuries, we all seemed to relax and knew that we were in a safe non-judgemental place with new friends.

The STEPS Program was something that I needed to do. It brought

together a group of people who need support, can bounce ideas of how they cope, and suggest ways of managing issues that some of us shared or have.

I am so thankful I have met these truly amazing, strong people, who I now call my friends.

## Young ABI- Buranda

The concept of a STEPS Skills Program for young adults (i.e., 18-30 years) who have experienced an ABI was first trialled in 2013. Given this initial success, another 6-week Young ABI STEPS Skills Program

started on 26 May. The group was led by Kali and Penny (peer leaders – both young adults with brain injury) at the ABIOS offices. While smaller in numbers this time around, the sense of connection between group

participants was just as strong. The group found that keeping things relaxed was the best approach. This helped everyone feel comfortable in opening up to share their experiences and the challenges of life as a young person after ABI. Everyone enjoyed Kali and Penny's catering choices! The group went all out on chocolate for the week 6 activity by catching-up at Max Brenner's at Southbank – one can never have too much chocolate! The group has since joined the Young ABI STEPS Network Group, which meets every month at Southbank in Brisbane (not just for the chocolate!).



## Emerald

Following leader training in early June, there was no waiting around and Emerald kicked off its first STEPS Skills Program in late June. The program was led by 2 local service providers Linda Gibson from Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, and Annmaree Wallen from PCYC. They were ably assisted by group participants, who took a very active role in the program. Some of our members' attendance was interrupted by ill health during the program, but fortunately nearly everyone could make the Week 6 break-up activity. Linda had arranged for a journo from the local paper to run a story about the group and take some photos- with everyone wearing beanies, as it was

during Brain Injury Awareness Week. The group has already played pool at a local hotel for the past couple of

Thursdays, and plans to keep doing this for their short-term future.



## Bundaberg written by Shane Isles

The 2014 Steps Skills Program commenced in Bundaberg on Friday, May 9 using an afternoon timeslot between the hours of 1-3pm. The program was delivered with two facilitators in the Ozcare training room with a group of ten participants. From the moment everyone met on week one it was quite clear that this group intended on enjoying themselves by having a laugh, but also applying themselves to the content of the workbook, group activities and discussions.

This level of active involvement continued right the way through until week six!! A true credit to everyone involved. There wasn't a week that went by (maybe week one) that the food provided for the group wasn't enjoyed, in particular the Tim Tams.

For the Bundaberg program, there was a social worker from another community agency who attended for the duration of the six weeks and made some excellent connections and, valued input.

On week five, we had an eleventh participant who attended. This was great as this person was unfortunately unable to attend on the first four weeks. This person was immediately welcomed and participated in all activities and discussions as though she had been attending from week one.

Planning for our break up activity went smoothly once we all realized that perhaps a trip to Tahiti wasn't really affordable for some or, would fit with family and work commitments etc. So the group

decided that perhaps lunch at the local café 1928 in the beautiful Botanic Gardens would be suitable and, enjoyed by all. The café displays aviation memorabilia and décor to highlight the achievements of Bundaberg's famous icon, Bert Hinkler. It was in 1928 that Hinkler completed the first solo flight from Britain to Australia, hence the name of the café. It is 30 years since Bert Hinklers home in Britain was relocated to the Botanic Gardens brick by brick.

In conclusion, our lunch was thoroughly enjoyed, certificates were presented, the laughs continued and the group was invited to attend the monthly brain injury friends group. An enjoyable and relaxing way to finish off an excellent six weeks.

# STEPS PROGRAM LEADER TRAINING

We currently have no Leader Training scheduled for the rest of the year, BUT we are in discussions with some community sites to hold

training in 2015. If you would like to discuss STEPS Program Leader Training possibilities in your local

community, please contact us to start the process. We would love to hear from you.

# STEPS NETWORK GROUP REPORTS

## Redcliffe- North Lakes

The Redcliffe-North Lakes enjoyed, well, 2 separate gatherings, in July. The group enjoys trying new venues for lunch and other activities in the local area. In July, half the group went to the Mango Hill Tavern, where we had been previously. The other half of the group went to the nearby North lakes Tavern, where we had planned to go to try somewhere new. It was through some phone calls

to check on people we had been expecting that we realised the mix-up! We've joined the group together in the photo...even though they were in 2 separate places. We

rejoined in August, having the one lunch meeting together at North Lakes Tavern!



## Brisbane North

The Brisbane North STEPS Network Group now officially exists! After consideration by the group recently, a name change from "Nundah-Chermside" to "Brisbane North"

happened. The group feels this reflects their identity more accurately, as members now come from quite a few different suburbs in

the Brisbane north region.

The group has also done some varied activities these past few months- from bocce in the park to games afternoons, including 'Celebrity Head' and 'Guess Who', to name a few. These activities have exercised our brains- planning, strategising, organising, etc; brought out our competitive streaks; and also been lots of fun!



# READER CONTRIBUTION

## It Pays to be Persistent!

For many years, Donna Sanderson, a STEPS Program Leader and member of the Brisbane Central STEPS Network Group, has been trying to get a footpath installed in her street so that she can safely access the community. For years, Donna has had to wheel her wheelchair up the middle of the road to get out of her street because there was no footpath. Because she leads an active life and enjoys going to the gym, this is something that she had become accustomed to almost everyday. While her street is not very long, it's not hard to work out that wheeling up the middle of the street is not without risks! Donna lobbied the local council for many years to have a footpath put in. Earlier this year, her persistence in advocating for herself and others paid off with council installing a footpath along Donna's side of the road. She is now able to get out and about in

her community in a safe way – well done Donna! It goes to show that persistence pays!



Here's Donna with the footpath being completed!

# BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS WEEK PHOTO GALLERY



# SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

## Peer-facilitated Brain Tumour Support Group- Brisbane- Cancer Council Queensland

This is a new group for the Brisbane area and is managed and facilitated by a group of patients and carers, to provide information and support to those affected by brain tumours.

**What is it:** regular meetings to offer information and support. Guest speakers provide presentations at some meetings, e.g. exercise physiologist, nutritionist. At other meetings, people provide social support to each other.

**Who is it for:** for people affected by brain tumours, and their families.

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of every month, 10am to 12 noon.

**Venue:** Auditorium 1, Ground Floor, Cancer Council

Queensland, 553 Gregory Terrace, Fortitude Valley.

**Parking:** Limited parking is available underneath the building. On arrival, buzz reception to be let into the secure car park.

**Cost:** free

**RSVP:** preferable but not essential, you can just turn up

**Enquiries/contact details:** Cancer Council Queensland, ph 13 11 20 or email : [braintsg@gmail.com](mailto:braintsg@gmail.com)

This group is one of the services offered by the Brain Tumour Support Service. For more information about what else this service does, check out their website at [http://www.cancerqld.org.au/page/need\\_support/brain\\_tumour\\_support\\_service/](http://www.cancerqld.org.au/page/need_support/brain_tumour_support_service/) or call 13 11 20.

## Facebook page for Carers

One of our Network Group coordinators, Bryony, has recently started a group on Facebook for Carer's of people with an ABI. It's a place for people to share information and experiences of being a carer for someone with acquired brain injury.

People have been spreading the word and the group is gaining more members regularly.

The group is called "Carers of People with an Acquired Brain Injury" so you can find it on Facebook or you can copy and paste this link into your browser

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/416379471806758/>.

Please note it is a private page so only the group members can see whatever is posted on the wall.

# SPOTLIGHT ON... EMERALD

Established in 1879 as a base for building the western railway, Emerald is about 3 hours west of Rockhampton. Earlier in 1861, Peter MacDonald had started several pastoral runs around Emerald which he later combined to form the Emerald Downs station, the name taken from the colour of the grass after a heavy rain. This is where Emerald actually

gets its name from, not the nearby Gemfields, which are 45 mins west of Emerald. They are the largest and one of the richest sapphire fields in the southern hemisphere.

Once famous as a major sunflower producer, Emerald was chosen to be the site for a gigantic hand-painted reproduction of one of Vincent van Gogh's sunflower paintings. The painting itself is 7 x 10m and sits on an easel 25m high! The superstructure is in Morton Park, the final point in a local historic walk. Started over 17 years ago, the "Van Gogh Project" is a concept by Canadian artist, Cameron Cross. Cross' dream is to recreate the 7 sunflower paintings by van Gogh and

place them in 7 different towns around the world. There are currently only two other Big Easel sunflower paintings, one in Cross' home town of Altona, Canada and the other in Goodland, Kansas, USA. Each site is chosen by Cross to reflect the area's connection to sunflower production or to van Gogh himself, thus uniting the chosen towns and forming 'sister city' connections. While only 3 of these immense paintings are currently completed, discussions continue with South Africa and Japan for future sites.

Each reproduction is painstakingly hand painted by Cross over 1 ½ months. Emerald's painting was erected in November 1999.

<http://www.queenslandplaces.com.au/emerald>  
<http://www.bigeeasel.com/>





# STEPS CHRISTMAS PARTY DATE CLAIMER



Wednesday, 3 December, 10am-12 noon

STEPS Program 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 Greater Brisbane Christmas Party 2014!

**When:** Wednesday 3 December

**Time:** 10:00am– 12noon for morning tea

**Where:** Frangipani Court, Roma St Parkland, Brisbane

[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).

**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

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!

**Catering:** Sausage sizzle, morning tea and cold drinks will be provided by STEPS Program

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.

**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.



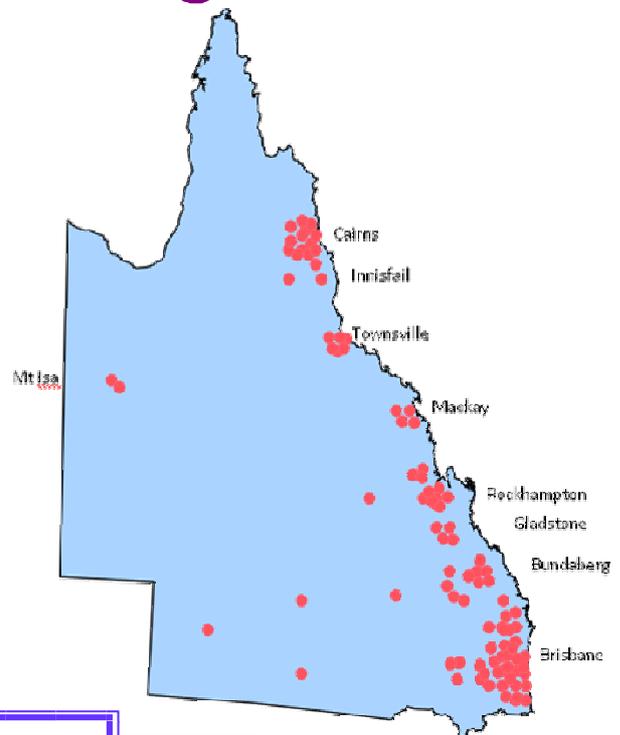
## STEPS SKILLS PROGRAM IN QLD MAP

**2014-** Bundaberg, Cairns North, Centenary, Chermside, Coopers Plains, Cooroy, Edmonton, Emerald, Gladstone, Gold Coast, Hervey Bay, Ipswich, Logan North, Mackay (2), Maroochydore, Rockhampton, Townsville, Toowoomba, Yeppoon, Young ABI

**2013 -** Atherton, Beenleigh, Browns Plains, Bundaberg, Buranda (Young ABI) (2), Caboolture, Cairns (Edmonton), Cairns (North), Caloundra, Capalaba, Centenary, Chermside, Coopers Plains, Gladstone, Gold Coast (Headway), Ipswich, Logan North, Mackay, Maroochydore, North Lakes, Robina (2), Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Townsville (CRNQ), Wynnum

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

**2006- 2011-** Beaudesert, Biloela, Brisbane (average 8.5/yr), Bundaberg (3), Cairns (7), Caloundra, Charleville (2), Cunnamulla, Far South West Qld, Gold Coast (5), Gordonvale, Innisfail, Ipswich, Kingaroy, Mackay (3), Maroochydore (3), Maryborough, Mt Isa (2), Noosaville, Redcliffe, Rockhampton (8), Roma, Toowoomba (2), Townsville (4), Warwick (3), Yarraman, Yeppoon.



### THE STEPS

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