

# STEPS PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

**S** **KILLS** **T** **O** **E** **NABLE** **P** **EOPLE & COMMUNITIES** **S**

## MANAGER REFLECTIONS FOR 2015



Queensland  
Government

Princess Alexandra Hospital

Metro South Health

December 2015

Issue 40

Over the course of the year, STEPS Skills Programs have been offered in 23 sites around Queensland, and there are now 28 ongoing STEPS Network Groups. These programs were managed by our magnificent STEPS Program leaders who, again in 2015, delivered and coordinated these local programs. We expanded our leader group in some locations, and offered leader training elsewhere to replace leaders who had left the STEPS Program for one reason or another.

As always, our amazing STEPS Program leaders have done a wonderful job in their local communities around Queensland. To our new leaders for 2015- welcome aboard and thank you for joining our passionate STEPS Program leader group. To our longer-term leaders, thank you again for another year of hard work and commitment. To all our leaders collectively, thanks for being the STEPS Program "in action" around Queensland. As I always say, there would be no STEPS Program without you. A heart-felt thanks from the STEPS Program.

Many of our Network Groups explored new territory in 2015, with some trying out new activities (see story about Townsville and Cairns on page 4), while others trialled new meeting schedules or arrangements. One particular highlight was the Toowoomba Network Group which ventured to Stanthorpe together for a few days in October. They had acknowledged there would be a big difference between meeting together for a few hours once per month and travelling and being 'tourists' together for a few days, so they spent a lot of time discussing the trip, their expectations, what everyone wanted to do, how they would organise their time, etc. It was a resounding success. Congratulations to Mary-Ann, Toowoomba local coordinator, for supporting the group to take this leap of faith together, and then enjoying the experience. We will feature a full story about their trip in our March 2016 edition.

For the second (and final) time, we participated in the Potential Unlimited program, an outdoor education & adventure program run by Outward Bound Australia. Specifically designed for adults with brain injury, it combines challenging outdoor adventure activities (e.g. hiking, abseiling, caving, etc.) with personal goal setting & group support to help people discover, develop & achieve their potential.— see page 6.



To Judith, acting STEPS Program Coordinator in 2015, thank you for your efforts and support for the STEPS Program. It was certainly a steep learning curve to begin with! I would especially like to thank Judith for establishing and managing the STEPS Program Facebook page, which is a great complementary way for people to connect with each other. Thanks!

We wish everyone a safe and relaxing festive season and Happy New Year 2016.

**Areti**

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# STEPS PROGRAM STAFF NEWS

There is more STEPS Program staff news to share: Ben Turner will extend his project officer role with the Division of Rehabilitation at Princess Alexandra Hospital for the first 6 months of 2016. We farewell Judith Nance who has

been acting in the STEPS Program Coordinator role and thank her for her great efforts in 2015.

We will welcome Tanya Ashton, who will act in the STEPS Program Coordinator role from Jan-

uary until June 2016. Tanya is familiar with the STEPS Program as she was formerly one of our service provide leaders in Townsville. We will feature more about Tanya in our March 2016 edition.

# STEPS SKILLS PROGRAM REPORTS

## ATHERTON by Louise Anderson-Clemence

Our STEPS Skills Program , co-lead by Deb Lowrie from TRCA, Caroline Black from TC Link and myself. The weeks flew by as we gelled well in our first time leading together. We had a wonderful day at Lake Tinaroo for our group- break-up activity on Saturday 21 November. Unfortunately we got cut short as a decent storm hit for about an hour, so most of us got soaking wet! Luckily one group got to go out

on the boat before the rain. The Graduation Certificates were gratefully received, including a special certificate to thank the Ravenshoe Freemason's Lodge for their generous donation of some BBQ food and crockery. The new members have already had a meeting with the Atherton STEPS Network Group, and this will continue into 2016.



## TOOWOOMBA

As one of the last programs to start in 2015, the Toowoomba group gelled together from the very beginning. Our experienced leaders, Mary-Ann and Deb, felt that this just happened naturally, without much facilitation needed from them. Because people felt comfortable together so quickly, it meant there was lots of discussion and reflection together each week. The program culminated with a shared picnic in the lush Laurel Bank gardens.



## CAIRNS NORTH

It was time to put skills and training into action in October, with 2 new leaders, Gretel Burgess (peer leader) and Nicole Brown (service provider leader) co-leading this program. The group itself ended up being quite small, with a couple of last-minute withdrawals just before it began. It was a good opportunity to explore topic areas in more depth. Unfortunately, one member was re-admitted to hospital towards the end of the program. However, Gretel and Nicole were able to be flexible and renegotiated the break-up time and place to accommodate this. Sometimes, this can be easier said than done, so big thanks to Gretel and Nicole for being able to accomplish this. Gretel has also been busy raising awareness of young stroke and promoting the STEPS Program in far north Queensland- see page 7.

## EMERALD

As one of our last groups for 2016, the Emerald program was led very capably by peer leader Alan Thomas and new co-leader Joanne Fanning, who is a Local Area Coordinator for the Emerald Region. Despite it being the first time they had led a program together, they felt they worked together very well. All members participated in group discussions, and the leaders were able to facilitate input from some members with word-finding problems. Time-keeping of sessions improved by using the wall clock as a time reference. For the group break-up activity, members of the existing Emerald Network Group were invited to join in, making it a combined break-up and Christmas Party.



## TARINGA by Maria Hoogstrate and Nick Johnson



The group ran from the Taringa Baptist church and had over 8 people on average at each meeting. There was a diverse range of people, with all kinds of different stories relating to their injury and interesting life experiences. From the beginning, the high rate of sharing ideas and offering others suggestions and alternatives to try led to people experiencing and trying things out that they may not have done before, e.g. one person shared their experience using Neuro-nation website to increase memory & as a result others tried it and now use Neuro-nation regularly.

The group focus became clear early on: to capture all of the great ideas and collate them into a publication to be shared with others. This idea came out of one of the group members asking the others a question and for their ideas on 'how to stay positive'. The response was immediate and people around the table offered their ideas and suggestions for how they do this. They also encouraged the person not to give up. The group leaders have recorded these ideas and will publish them on STEPS Program Facebook and print hard copies for the Taringa group.

# STEPS SKILLS PROGRAM REPORTS (CONT.)

## CAIRNS EDMONTON by Gail, Ancilla and Rose

The Edmonton STEPS Skills Program 2015 team celebrated their achievements together at Cazalys in Cairns on 3 December with deep discussions about family & managing the risks of further strokes intertwined with laughter & amusement too ! This course has provided each leader & participant with a unique learning experience and the main outcomes were the friendships established and one of our participants considering being a STEPS Program leader in 2016.



# STEPS NETWORK GROUP REPORTS

## IT'S OFF TO THE MOVIES IN CAIRNS AND TOWNSVILLE

In recent times, 2 of our northern Queensland Network Groups have ventured to the movies. Cairns has regularly been watching a movie together, then having a discussion over lunch at a restaurant nearby, since September this year. In October, Townsville did the same thing. In September, the Cairns group watched 'The Last Cab to Darwin', in October it was 'The Martian' and most recently it was 'The Dressmaker'. In Townsville, the group watched 'The Intern'. Great benefits of the movie/discussion meetings have been:

- Discussion together immediately after the movie. This allows people with memory problems the chance to have parts of the movie filled in by others (e.g. a scene they might have forgotten). This is also helpful for people with reduced information processing speed, concentration and attention problems, inflexibility in thinking and difficulty with reasoning. People simply get to understand the movie better through having such discussion.
- Participating in a 'normal' social community activity, such as going to the movies.
- The convenience of meeting at the same place each month. People know when and where to meet each month and how to get there.

- The comfort of meeting in airconditioned venues, which is an issue for several months of the year for both groups, as it is too hot to meet outside

There have also been some challenges the groups have had to address, particularly the Cairns group who have been doing the activity for a few months:

- Choosing a movie that all members want to see
- Choosing a movie that group members have not seen already (and/or are willing to see again)
- Choosing an exact movie far enough in advance to put the details on the monthly flyer. Movie listings change on a weekly basis, so sometimes the movie the group had planned to see is no longer screening a few weeks later (i.e by the time the day of the monthly meeting comes around)
- Cost of combined outing of movie followed by lunch can be a bit expensive for some members to do month after month.

Both groups have certainly enjoyed the movie experience.



## IPSWICH

It was a scorcher of a day in October when the Ipswich Network Group met to go lawn bowling at the Ipswich United Sports Club. From a large group of 15 or so who came on the day, only an intrepid few ventured out onto the green, with the rest happy to be spectators from the air-conditioned comfort of the clubhouse. The Ipswich Network Group is quite an adventurous one, with swimming, picnics and putt-putt amongst the activities arranged in 2015, interspersed with a few more formal information sessions at the Ipswich Humanities Centre. No doubt we will explore more local activities again in 2016.



## BRISBANE BAYSIDE –Judith and Ellie



The Bayside Network Group likes to do something different each month, and while it is usually centred around food, sometimes there is actual activity involved!

That was the case in August when the group went 10 pin bowling although, admittedly, it was followed by lunch! Our members from Casuarina Lodge enjoyed the day, and joined with the rest of the group in welcoming Ellie Copeland, a past leader in Bris-

bane Central who has now moved into the area. Ellie is keen to continue her involvement with STEPS by supporting this group and, hopefully, leading a new Bayside STEPS Skills Program in 2016.

From Ellie: I am so happy to be a part of the STEPS Bayside Network Group. I trained as a leader 7 years ago and after a long break I'm excited about meeting new and old members in 2016.

My highlights of 2015 have been meeting the group for a fun and challenging game of Ten Pin Bowling followed by lunch, a fish and chip lunch at Raby Bay and wonderful conversation and sharing over lunch at Redland Bay Hotel.



# POTENTIAL UNLIMITED PROGRAM 2015

A group of 10 STEPS Program peer leaders/participants travelled to Canberra from 21-27 October to complete the challenging course. The members, mostly from regional and rural Queensland, were heavily involved in planning for the trip through regular monthly teleconferences. A key focus was also fundraising for transport costs for the trip, in partnership with the PA Research Foundation.

The cost for the week-long course itself - meals, accommodation & all adventure activities - was generously provided by 'The Friendly Ride', which was established by Andy Friend and his wife, Kerri Rawlings.

Kerri experienced a severe brain injury in a mountain bike accident in 2010. In 2011, Andy rode his mountain bike 5000km from Cooktown to Canberra to raise awareness and funds for brain injury rehabilitation. Kerri used the 93 day trip as part of her recovery - she was part of the back-up crew assisting with planning, etc, as well as encouraging Andy along the way). Together, they raised over \$90,000 - 50% was donated to Brain Injury Australia and the other 50% to Outward Bound Australia to run the Potential Unlimited Program. Several groups have now benefited from the generous donation of Andy

and Kerri. Without their support, our trip would not have been possible. Many STEPS Network Groups also hosted fundraising events throughout the year, including groups who didn't even have a local group member going on the trip. Thanks very much for your financial support. We exceeded our target of \$10 000.

We will now continue work with the participants so they can use the lessons learned throughout the journey to further develop their skills as STEPS Program leaders and thereby better support others in their local STEPS Network Groups.



## STEPS Program art raffle results

Kindly donated by Troy Little from the Bayside Network Group this beautiful STEPS painting was raffled to raise in excess of \$2000 towards our Potential Unlimited fundraising target.

Congratulations to Aaron from Townsville, seen here being presented with his prize by Mick Roache, one of the local STEPS Network Group leaders,

and Noel Ball, a long-term Network Group member.

Aaron works at the Sports Club where the Townsville group often meets.

The painting was a much desired prize, but unfortunately there could only be one winner.....



# STEPS PROGRAM LEADER TRAINING

We have completed all STEPS Program Leader training for 2015. If you are interested in STEPS Program leader training for your local community in 2016, please contact us to discuss your local needs.

## READER CONTRIBUTIONS

Two of our members were busy during National Stroke Awareness Week this year, especially raising awareness of younger people with stroke.

In Cairns, peer leader Gretel Burgess attended an afternoon tea hosted by local politician Warren Entsch highlight the upcoming National Stroke Awareness Week. She discussed her experience and positive recovery processes, particularly as a younger stroke survivor. This impressed Mr Entsch to such an extent that he recounted her experience in a parliamentary speech. His speech included details of the stroke experience acutely, and mentioned specifically Gretel's involvement with the STEPS Program. Gretel has now used her experience to her advantage, training to run the STEPS program as a peer leader. She has also finished her studies, and graduated as a social worker. See more at: <https://strokefoundation.com.au/news/2015/09/09/do-not-ignore-stroke-risk-by-the-hon-warren-entsch-mp>

Further south in Brisbane, Kristina Row, a fit and healthy former triathlete, experienced several strokes at the age of 40. She shared her story in a moving radio interview on ABC local radio Brisbane. Kristina speaks calmly and eloquently about her strokes and her efforts to survive, as part of the 30% of Australian survivors of stroke in the working age range. You can listen to the interview at: <https://soundcloud.com/612abcbrisbane/kristina-row-young-stroke-survivor>

## SPOTLIGHT ON...NAMBOUR



Nambour is a town in the sub-tropical hinterland of the Sunshine Coast at the foot of the Blackall Range and has a population of 10,221. Nambour's primary industry has been sugar, with extensive cane fields surrounding the town, and the Moreton Sugar Mill in the town centre. The mill itself began operating in 1897 until it was closed in 2003. Other industries in the area include tourism, and the growing of tropical fruits.

Situated near Nambour is the Queensland Government's Maroochy Research Station which is a major subtropical fruit and nut research and extension centre. Established in 1945, it has an office and laboratory complex, glasshouses, netted orchards, post-harvest coolrooms and a biotechnology facility. Famous people born in Nambour include rugby league players Billy Slater and Casey McGuire, cricketers Lee Carseldine and Ashley Noffke, professional surfer Joel Parkinson, politicians Kevin Rudd, and Wayne Swan, golfer Ian Baker-Finch, music producer and songwriter Mike Chapman, and Powderfinger drummer Jon Coghill.

Daniel Keighran, born in Nambour in 1983, was awarded Australia's military highest honour in 2012: the Victoria Cross for Australia, for bravery during the Battle of Derapet in Afghanistan.

# TOWNSVILLE WINNERS- POEM FOR COWBOYS FOOTY TEAM

While the STEPS Program is one big, inclusive Queensland family, there are some differences amongst groups across the state. One key area is which footy team people barrack for. Our footy-mad Townsville Network Group were indeed grinners when their local team, the North Queensland Cowboys, trounced a Brisbane team, the Brisbane Broncos, in the grand final of the National Rugby League comp this year. This long-awaited first win for the local team inspired group member Noel Ball to put pen to paper in their honour!

The Cowboys team is full of winners  
North Queensland is full of grinners  
The place needs a major lift  
It may start with this little gift.

The game was played with good intent  
The playing attitude wasn't bent  
The teams tried with all their skills  
Pushed hard on their physical wills.

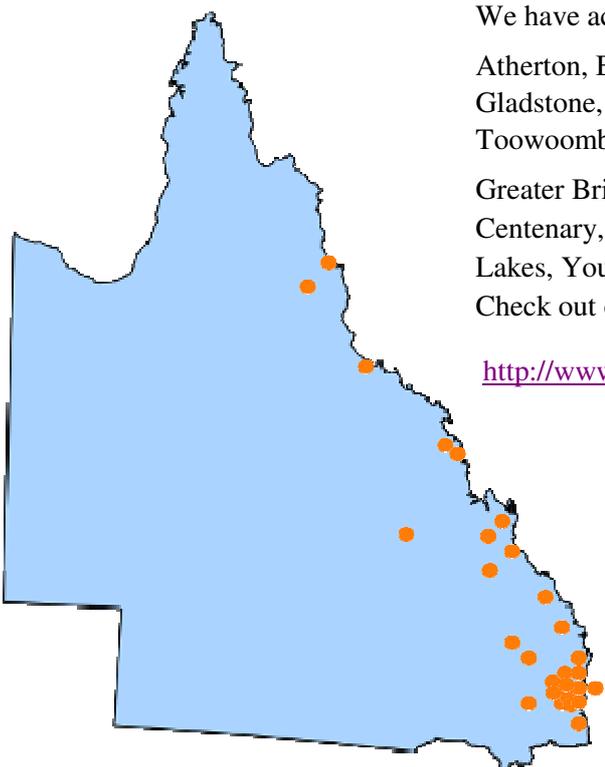
Must feel sorry for Alfie Langer  
His on field sorties ended up as a clanger  
Wayne tried hard with all his moves  
But ended up slipping out of the grooves.

JT, Scotty, Paul and the team  
Ended up fulfilling the dream  
Twenty years is a long wait  
But now we'll proudly walk through the gate.

The end was rather tight  
But then Cowboys FELDT just right  
Needed a field goal for the final seal  
Felt good it was actually real.

Broncos & Cowboys showed how it's  
played  
The Southern teams look really staid  
We have started a new trend  
Northward bound is where it will end.

## STEPS PROGRAM NETWORK GROUPS IN QLD



We have active Network Groups in the communities below:

Atherton, Biloela, Bundaberg, Cairns, Emerald, Fraser Coast Hinterland, Gladstone, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Mackay, Maroochydore, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Townsville, Yarraman, Yeppoon.

Greater Brisbane: Bayside, Brisbane Central, Browns Plains, Caboolture, Centenary, Logan North, Mt Gravatt, Brisbane North, Redcliffe/North Lakes, Young ABI Brisbane South, Young ABI Brisbane North, Taringa.  
Check out our website for full details for any group

[http://www.health.qld.gov.au/abios/steps/asp/steps\\_networkgroups.asp](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/abios/steps/asp/steps_networkgroups.asp)

### THE STEPS PROGRAM

Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service (ABIOS)

PO Box 6053, Buranda 4102

Ph: (07) 3406 2311 or 1300 727 403 (outside Brisbane— local call cost from fixed phone line)

Fax: (07) 34062399 Email: [STEPS@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:STEPS@health.qld.gov.au)