

How to Join STEPS Program Facebook page

1. You will need your own Facebook page. If you need help to set this up, ask at your local library OR ask any young person you know and trust. Be sure to work out your preferred privacy settings too.
2. Log in to your own Facebook page
3. On the Search Bar at the top left of the screen type in **Skills To Enable People and Communities**

4. Click on the green join group button, as shown below



Click on join group

5. The 'STEPS Coordinator' will then need to approve the request as Skills To Enable People and

Communities is a closed group. The 'STEPS Coordinator' also needs to approve all posts to the page.

Join us to keep up to date with what's happening with the STEPS Program.

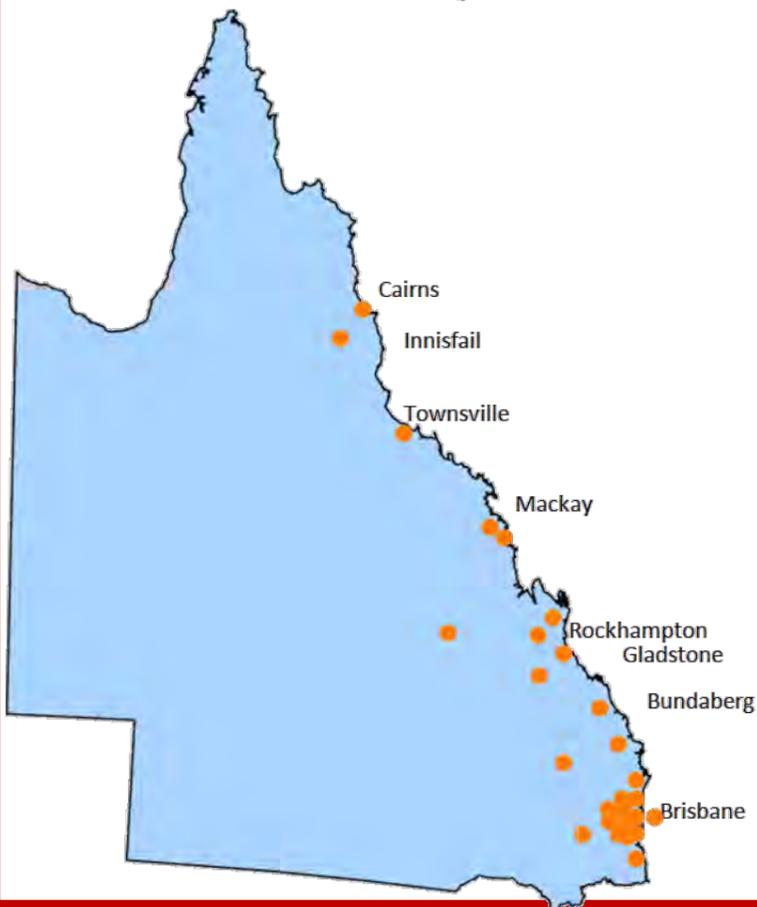
Of course you can still find STEPS Program information on our website www.health.qld.gov.au/abios/stepsdefault.asp

Christmas at STEPS

STEPS has celebrated Christmas with a combined Brisbane Network Groups party at Roma St Parkland on November 30 and with many Christmas break up parties around the State. A full wrap-up of the celebrations of 2016 will be covered in the March 2017 newsletter.



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, Mackay, Maroochydore, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Townsville, Yarraman, Yeppoon.

Greater Brisbane: Bayside, Brisbane Central, Brisbane North, Browns Plains, Caboolture, Centenary, Ipswich, Logan North, Mt Gravatt, Redcliffe/North Lakes, Taringa Young ABI Brisbane South, Young ABI Brisbane North.

Check out our website for full details for any group <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/>

**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 costs from a



SKILLS TO ENABLE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

From the Manager - Reflections on 2016

Inside this Christmas issue:-

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- P6. Combined Ipswich-Toowoomba & Mt Gravatt Network Group Reports
- P7. Gladstone & Toowoomba Network Group Report
- P8. Ipswich & Young ABI Network Group Report
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Another year draws to a close for the STEPS Program. What a year 2016 has been! The STEPS Program has seen some major changes this year. The most notable has been Areti Kennedy leaving STEPS to move to a new position as Manager of the Acquired Brain Injury Transitional Rehabilitation Service. In addition, Ben Turner has completed his project work, formally left his STEPS role and has started as a Rehabilitation coordinator at ABIOS. Despite these changes Tanya and I have continued on the work of STEPS without too many challenges. STEPS has run many successful STEPS Skills Programs around the state and there has been continued STEPS Network Group activity. STEPS has run STEPS Program Leader training in Brisbane, Rockhampton, Mt Isa and more.

My goal in my first six months in this role was to meet as many people involved in the STEPS Program as possible. I have attended many STEPS Program Network Groups, spoken with many people involved with STEPS on the phone or via email and I would like to thank you all for making me feel so welcome to the STEPS Program. If I haven't had the opportunity to meet you, I hope that our paths will cross in the coming year.

I would like to thank all of the STEPS Program Leaders for your hard work and dedication to the STEPS Program in your local community because without you, the STEPS Program would not exist. Your willingness to take time out of your busy lives to deliver programs and support groups is to be commended. I would particularly like to acknowledge the STEPS Program Peer Leaders on the unique and valuable contribution you make to the STEPS Program. You all play a vital role in ensuring the ongoing success of the STEPS Program. This role was acknowledged as STEPS Program Peer Leaders winning the Empower People category of the Metro South Board Chair awards in July, which was a highlight of my first six months at STEPS.

Thanks to Ray Quinn (ABIOS Manager) and ABIOS staff for your continued support for the STEPS Program and supporting me in my transition to this new role. A special thank you to Tanya Ashton! Thank you for your hard work and dedication to the STEPS Program and I personally wish to thank you for your support and encouragement as I have transitioned to my role as STEPS Program Manager. You have quietly and patiently answered my thousands of questions about the intricacies of the STEPS Program and I look forward to our continued work in 2017.



On behalf of the STEPS Program staff we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a safe and relaxing festive season.

Sue

STEPS Skills Program Reports

The Buranda STEPS Skills Program

The Buranda STEPS Skills Program was led in October by Maria Hoogstrate (STEPS Peer leader) and Cathie Spicer (Social Worker) at the ABIOS office. The group enjoyed great discussions and sharing ideas during the six weeks. The group had their group break up at a lovely café in South Bank. Maria and Cathie asked that the group members shared some of their reflections from the experience of the STEPS group. These are some of the reflections from the Buranda participants:

- ◆ "I got to talk with others who understand. At the end of day I appreciate other people in my everyday life, but they can't relate like the people I met at STEPS."
- ◆ "I'm happy to have met so many lovely people. It's quiet at home alone, stuck in the one problem. Here I have similar people I can relate to."
- ◆ "Such lovely people - I enjoy it a lot."
- ◆ "STEPS has been a rich valuable experience outside clinical experience, I got to see the real effect it has on people and I never felt like an outsider" **Laura (Occupational Therapy Student)**
- ◆ "I love the ability to network here and am so happy to share the experiences. I appreciate that I could talk to others and contribute my own thoughts."
- ◆ "I recently had the anniversary of my stroke. Previously I would have been so annoyed that I had my stroke. I wish it hadn't happened, but it did. Through this STEPS group, I can see a way of getting through things now."
- ◆ "After being in hospital and I went to the first session I said to my wife on the way home that I really liked the group and it is very important."

As always Maria shared some inspiring thoughts for the Buranda STEPS Skills Program participants
"It's never to late to start over. If you weren't happy with yesterday, try something different today. Don't stay stuck. Do better!"



Update on Jennifer Parry's Amazing walk

Jennifer was diagnosed with Glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) at 28 years of age. GBM is the most aggressive form of brain cancer – a terminal illness. Jennifer was given 3 ½ months to live and she was told to "go home and sort out your things" by the radiation oncologist. Her tumour never grew back and Jennifer is still fighting on 11 years later. As we reported in our STEPS newsletter from June 2016 Jennifer was walking 385km solo from her home in Mt Perry to Toowoomba. Jennifer is a long-term member of the Bundaberg Brain Injury Friends (STEPS) group. Jennifer's hope is to help others who have this terrible cancer and diagnosis like hers by raising funds for the QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute which is doing research into immunotherapy for treatment of GBM. Jennifer spent months planning her walk, organising food parcels and places to stay on her journey. She was told that she couldn't do it... that it will never work. It's too far. It's too dangerous. You can't do it by yourself. You can't carry that heavy bag. There's not enough water. You can't. What if it rains. You can't. There's too many weirdos. The world is a bad place. Anything could happen. There are so many snakes. You can't. What if you hurt yourself. It's not safe. It's too scary.

Well, we are pleased to announce that Jennifer DID IT. She completed her solo 385 km walk. Jennifer left home on the 15th August travelling from Mt Perry via Ban Ban Springs, Boobyjan, Tansey, Goomeri, Murgon, Wondai, Wooroolin, Kingaroy, Nanango, Yarraman, Cooyar, Glenaven, Pinelands, Crows Nest, Hampton, Carbarlah arriving in Toowoomba on 14th September. Jennifer completed her trip in 28 days with a total of approximately 481 375 steps. This is an amazing achievement and STEPS congratulates Jennifer on her courageous and inspiring walk to honour her friends she lost to brain cancer and raise funds for better outcomes to patients with GBM.

Jennifer has written a blog documenting her journey. You can see all a day by day description on <http://gbmsurvivor.wordpress.com/> If you wish to find out more about Jennifer's fundraising efforts, see Jennifer's Everyday Hero pages: <http://give.everydayhero.com/au/jennifer-56>



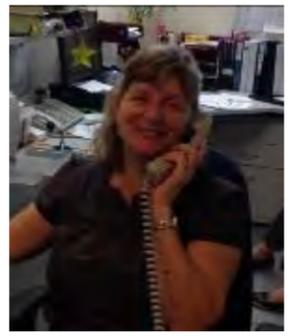
Staff News



Kelsey Upcroft –STEPS Admin Officer who works for STEPS one day per week left STEPS to go on maternity leave in October. We are pleased to announce that Kelsey welcomed a new baby girl, Waverly Claire on 25th November. Congratulations to Kelsey and her family on the arrival of this new blessing to their family.



Susan Nott has joined the STEPS Program staff as our new Admin officer whilst Kelsey is on maternity leave. Susan has a wealth of administrative experience. She comes from Cancer Services at the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane, where she has worked for seven years. Susan has a special interest in brain and spinal injuries as she has a couple of very close friends who suffered a motor vehicle accident, who she still supports during their recovery. She was also born with spina bifida herself, so knows a thing or two about long hospital stays and numerous surgeries! She really enjoyed meeting some of you at the Brisbane STEPS Christmas party and looks forward to meeting more of you in the months ahead.



The Ed and Flash Story

Ed sustained a TBI after collapsing and hitting his head in Afghanistan in 2013. After a period of rest, rehabilitation and failed return-to-work programs, it became obvious that his injuries were permanent and his focus turned to regaining normal family life.

He initially gained a lot of assistance from the family labrador, Bailey, who would accompany Ed on walks and to the children's school. However in 2015 Bailey became blind and was unable to leave the house easily. The subsequent impact on Ed and increased feelings of isolation led his OT to suggest getting another dog, to give Ed the support that Bailey had informally provided.

Ed's wife Lou then began investigating the options for a formal assistance dog. None of the companies she contacted could provide a dog, when there was already a dog living at the address; however Whiskey's Wish were able to help out with training a dog provided by the owner. Whiskey's Wish is a charity that primarily trains service dogs to help support people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a war veteran, Ed was eligible for their program, with Whiskey's Wish willing to accommodate the needs of a total brain injury (TBI) rather than PTSD.

In order to be an assistance/service dog (as opposed to a companion dog), the dog must be trained in at least three areas of support for the owner, as well as pass stringent public access behaviour tests. Training can take over two years. Flash is a Kelpie who was rescued by Working Breed Rescue from a pound in Mackay. He was fostered by a family until being adopted by Ed and Lou after a chance meeting at the Samford Show.



Already Ed is able to go to more places independently (like STEPS groups) as well as weekly training sessions with Flash. Ed and Lou have also noticed the positive effect Flash has had on their children, both of whom have struggled to deal with the changes in Ed and the impact on family life.

After 3 months of basic training, Flash (and Ed) were awarded a red "in training" jacket which gives



Flash the right to be taken into public areas not usually accessible to dogs. They are now having further training which will eventually lead to Flash becoming a fully qualified service dog. Ed is hoping that Flash will be able to do things such as turn the lights on at night for him, help remind him if he hasn't locked the house prior to going out, lead him back to the car if he gets disorientated when out, and identify when Ed is overcome by an environment and lead him to a quieter area to recover.

Thanks to Ed and his wife Louise for sharing their story. The STEPS Younger ABI Brisbane North Network group look forward to Flash being a regular attendee at their meetings.

STEPS Skills Program Reports cont.

The Logan STEPS Skills Program

We two Logan Peer Leaders, Jon and John, have just recently had a good time with a delightful group of 7 persons with an ABI and 3 family members.

We started out as complete strangers and finished as firm friends. The program drew the best out of the participants and it was so obvious each week we saw them become more and more involved.

After some thoughts, discussion, and local knowledge displayed, it was decided that the break-up function be a luncheon celebration at the Logan Rec Club. This event turned out to be very enjoyable, helped by delicious cuisine, good company and happy and intelligent conversations. One of the highlights was the attendance of the Boss, Tanya, and another the handing out the certificates. As this is the last one in many we have had the pleasure to lead, this Group was up there with the best. The learning process goes on and on for both the participants and the Leaders. We hope that there is no end in sight for this so necessary program.



NOTE FROM STEPS PROGRAM COORDINATOR: Jon Giessler and John Enright have been co leading STEPS Skills Programs since 2009. Over those years they have led many programs mainly in the Logan area. This latest program reached a significant milestone of just over 100 participants co-led by John and Jon. Congratulations to them both and a big thank you for your contribution and commitment to the STEPS Program.

Nerang STEPS Skills Program



The Nerang STEPS Skills Program started on the 2nd November in a new venue, the Nerang Bicentennial Community Centre. The program was led by Marty Westguard (Peer Leader) and Alyson Beckett (trained service provider/FSG) as sometimes happens with groups, a few members were unable to complete the program but the small group appreciated the chance to catch up learn from each other and the leaders. For their session 6 activity they enjoyed a lunch at St Bernards Hotel in beautiful Mt Tamborine, just a hop skip and jump away.

Thank you to all participants and to Marty and Alyson for your valued role as Co Leaders.

STEPS Skills Program Reports

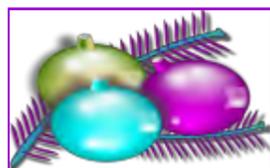
Bayside STEPS Skills Program



The Bayside STEPS Skills Program started on October 12th at Wynnum Health Service Centre and was led by Samantha (Peer Leader) and Ellie (Community Volunteer Leader). The group of 10 participants and family members made a strong connection from the start and enjoyed the opportunity to share their experiences, learn from each other, from the program and leaders. This connection enabled the group to connect with the Bayside Network Group and many participants attended the Bayside Christmas Celebration recently where they received a warm welcome from members. Thank you to all the participants, partners, friends and carers for being part of the program and to Ellie and Sam for sharing your knowledge. Looking forward to further opportunities to connect in 2017.

Rockhampton STEPS Skills Program

The Rockhampton Skills Program was recently held at the meeting room at Ozcare in Alma Street Rocky. The group although small, 2 participants and 2 leaders achieved a huge amount and strongly felt that they gained a lot from the program and the chance to share their experiences. It reinforced for the importance of giving an opportunity and the outcome may be rewarding. Robin and Paula, both trained leaders from Ozcare led their very first program and their adaptability, warmth and enthusiasm was greatly appreciated. For the session 6 activity the group enjoyed lunch out.



Cairns STEPS Skills Program

The Cairns STEPS Skills Program was held in October and was facilitated by Gretel Burgess (STEPS Peer Leader) and Nicole Brown (Trained Service Provider) at ARC Disability Services in Cairns.

Even though some of the participants were a little reluctant to share at first, after a few weeks the group participated very well with everyone contributing to group discussions and great rapport was formed within the group. There was lots of positive feedback from the attendees about the course and their leaders which was great to hear. The group enjoyed a BBQ on the beautiful Cairns Esplanade.

A number of people who attended the program are keen to attend the Cairns Network group and keep in touch as a number of great friendships were made.



Young ABI Brisbane North Network Group continued ...

The Ed and Flash Story

Ed is a member of the STEPS Young ABI Brisbane North Network Group. Ed brought along his assistance dog, Flash to the November STEPS Program meeting. Ed explains his story and how Flash has helped to support him following his ABI....



STEPS Network Group Reports

Ipswich Network Group



On Saturday 19th the Ipswich Network Group enjoyed a Christmas celebration lunch. Over 20 members and their families attended the gathering. The group appreciate the opportunity to have it on the weekend so family can be a part of the STEPS community. Santa came to visit and each member enjoyed a small gift to take home. The Ipswich Network Group will have a break over December/January and meet again in February. Thank you to all members for being part of the Ipswich Network Group and special thanks to Peer Leaders Mili, Megan and Doug.



Merry Christmas Everyone

Young ABI Brisbane North Network Group

With 2016 coming to an end and 2017 fast approaching, it's time for us all to reflect on the year.

The Young ABI Brisbane North group has had a fantastic year, which consisted of many great activities. We had some of our monthly meetings at the Chermside-Kedron Uniting Church where we met for morning tea and to discuss, as a group, many different issues that arise for younger people with an ABI. Some of these things were – how things like friendships and travelling can change after an ABI, Mindfulness, and the influences that pets can have, and how they can assist us with being more positive. One of our members, Ed, even bought along his new, four-legged companion, Flash! (see article about Ed & Flash)

We also ventured out and participated in a number of different activities in the community. The group went ten-pin bowling a few times, tried their hand at lawn bowls, twice, as the first time wasn't very successful. We also had lunch at the RSL, and finished up with a small Christmas morning tea at the Redcliffe lagoon.



I would like to thank everyone for a fantastic year, I hope you have all had as much fun as I have! I also hope that everyone stays safe and has an excellent time with their families and friends over the Christmas and New Year period.

I look forward to seeing you all next year and hearing many more incredible stories!

Nick Johnson—Young ABI Brisbane North Peer Leader

STEPS Network Groups Reports

Yeppoon Network Group



Yeppoon meet monthly on the first Monday and is supported by Jo, Peer Leader and Marilyn and Jenne-trained Leaders/Community Nurses. The group enjoy catching up at the Yeppoon Community Health rooms for afternoon tea, board games and also enjoy getting out to Ross Park for BBQs. The group actively raise awareness of brain injury and stroke by holding BBQs. The end of year celebration saw them catch up at Ferns Hideaway in Byfield, I hear it was a wonderful lunch, great music and a chance for a dance. **Merry Christmas from all at Yeppoon.**

Logan Network Group

By Jonathan Norberg Wright



*Well folks 2016 is drawing to a close
Where it went heavens knows
Our December lunch at Fitzzy's Pub Waterford
Drew many more than the usual horde
The food and service were first class
All attending gave Fitzzy's a first class pass
To this place we will return
For our February 2017 sojourn
So from us all to you all
May all your Christmas wishes into your hearts befall
And may the New Year be prosperous and healthy one
I thank you all for your friendship, participation and good fun*



STEPS Network Group Reports

Ipswich and Toowoomba Combined Network Group October

The inaugural Ipswich Toowoomba STEPS Network Group bowling competition was held on October 10th. This followed an earlier meeting in the year when Toowoomba Network Group travelled down to meet with the Ipswich group in Ipswich. Over lunch the groups had shared what they enjoyed doing and a plan was hatched to come together for a game of “friendly” ten pin bowling. Toowoomba NG meet fortnightly and enjoy ten pin bowling, Ipswich on the other hand was at a slight disadvantage with the bowling alley in Ipswich closed down for some time.

So on a windy Monday almost a dozen Ipswich NG members travelled together to Toowoomba and enjoyed a great game of ten pin bowling. The facilities were impressive with easy access, easy grip bowling balls and ramps. The Toowoomba NG were great hosts, having booked the lanes, explained the process and arranging a place to meet for lunch. There was much laughter, “having a go”, and also a healthy dose of competition. Over lunch, surprise awards (handmade by Toowoomba members) were handed out, with Toowoomba winning with the most points. However, Lorry from Ipswich grabbed the individual award. A very successful day with plans for a yearly re-match in October (plenty of time for practice!!)



Mount Gravatt Network Group

We are a small but very active STEPS group, which meets every fortnight at our regular café for a social catch up and morning tea in the Mt Gravatt area. One of our members, Nathan, has led us in Tai Chi and relaxation exercises in a local park. We also like to participate in lots of social outings together. This year we have car-pooled together in Don’s van on driving trips to a variety of places including Canungra, Bribie Island, Tamborine Mountain and Boonah.

We enjoy the opportunity to get together at these social outings.

Ty Hill Mt Gravatt Network Group Peer Leader



STEPS Network Group Reports

Gladstone Network Group

The Gladstone Network Group, supported by Peer Leaders, Joyce, Pat and Sharyn have had a busy and productive 2016. The group meet monthly on the third Thursday and during 2016 have enjoyed guest speakers, morning teas, picnics and BBQs. The Gladstone Network Group are also very active during Brain Injury Awareness Week and Stroke Awareness Week. This year they held community BBQs to raise awareness of brain injury including stroke in the Gladstone Community and their efforts were recognised in the local paper. These events help to provide information to those in the community who are in need. The Gladstone Network Group had their Christmas Party in early December and will then take a short break and meet again from February.



Toowoomba Network Group

This year has been a busy year for the Toowoomba STEPS Network Group. The group has their fortnightly bowling meetings which is always lots of fun and helped to prepare them for the Inaugural Ipswich/Toowoomba Bowling day in October (see Ipswich Network group for information). This was a highlight for the Toowoomba group with members saying it was a fantastic day and everyone enjoyed meeting with the Ipswich group. The other fortnightly meetings the Toowoomba group travel to a variety of local attractions including trips to Clifton Jam Factory and the Historical Museum and the Qld Motorsport Museum display. The group has also enjoyed visiting the many restaurants/cafes in Toowoomba and surrounds to taste the local fare. The group got into the Christmas spirit by making some Christmas treats. See the photos for the wonderful goodies the group made.

