SKILLS TO ENABLE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

STEPS Newsletter

From the Manager….

Many of you already know that 2009 has been the first, full year of the STEPS Program operating as a permanent Queensland Health service. STEPS Skills Programs and Network Groups have been active in many places. The STEPS team-Ben, Sue, Kelsey and I- have had the great pleasure of working with many talented STEPS leaders. You are the crucial connection between us and STEPS participants, the "face" of STEPS in your local community. Without your efforts, we simply would not be able to have STEPS operating in local communities throughout Queensland, connecting people together where they live. Thank you.

I also applaud the successes of our STEPS leaders and participants this year. I am proud of the successes reported in this newsletter and the many, many more that are not written here- but that have happened this year.

I look forward to continuing to share our efforts and successes together in 2010, as we STEP into a new decade.

Areti

STEPS

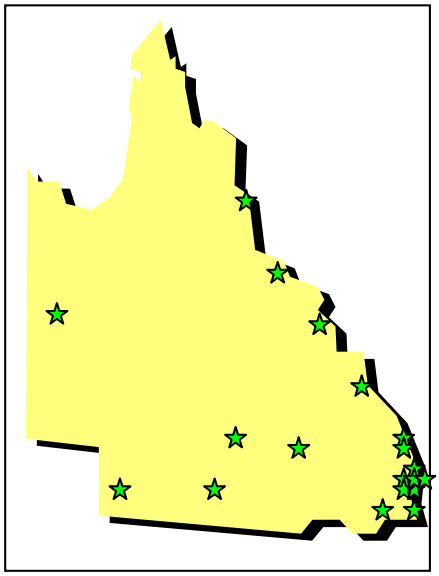
Issue 16

December 2009

Special Points of Interest:

- ☺ STEPS Skills Program Reports
- ☺ STEPS Logan
- ☺ Spotlight on… Mackay

STEPS Skills Programs in QLD Map



2006 STEPS Skills Programs - Maroochydore, Caloundra, Buranda, Cleveland, Gold Coast, Bundaberg, Capalaba, Mackay, Annerley

2007 STEPS Skills Programs - Gold Coast, Bracken Ridge, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Charleville, Innisfail, Kingston, Wooloowin, Roma, Cairns, Mitchelton and Carina

2008 STEPS Skills Programs - Logan, Chermside, Bracken Ridge, Charleville Rockhampton, Far South West QLD, Cunnamulla, New Farm, Maroochydore, Warwick

2009 STEPS Skills Programs - Logan (3 groups), Pine Rivers, Red Hill, Townsville, Mount Gravatt, Warwick, Rockhampton, Gordonvale, Smithfield, Riverview, Buranda, Cleveland, Nundah, Hillcrest, Redcliffe, Acacia Ridge, Mackay– Galaxy

Upcoming STEPS Skills Programs for 2010

As per the map above, much has happened in 2009. Now it is time to look forward to 2010. Early in the year, we are ready to go with STEPS Skills Programs in Mossman, Atherton, Rockhampton, Ipswich, Cleveland, and various parts of Brisbane. Contact Areti or Ben to find out more and to be on the mailing list for flyers.

Innisfail, Cairns and Mackay are also planning for STEPS Skills Programs in early to mid-2010.

We will also be working hard to get further STEPS Skills programs happening in Bundaberg, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Townsville. If you want to be involved or kept informed about these sites (and you aren't already on our mailing lists), please let us know… we'd love to hear from you.

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STEPS Skills Program Reports

STEPS Buranda

Our group started in October 2009 and met at the ABIOS Offices. Our fantastic leaders, Maria Hoogstrate and Marilyn Ginn have both experienced a traumatic brain injury and were an inspiration to the group. As a group, we discussed some sensitive issues and shared plenty of tears and laughter along the way. Our group commented that it was very helpful to get our own experiences out there and listen to others do the same. We finished the program by attending the STEPS Christmas Party in Brisbane together – a fabulous day was had by all! The group was very impressed with Maria's efforts in preparing the STEPS Cake for the day well done! The following week, we also had another morning tea back at the ABIOS offices where we enjoyed the cooking/baking skills of many of our group members – thanks Andrew and Angus. Brian and Jenny also showed the group some of their artwork – they're both very talented people! In 2010, the group hopes to meet again to re-visit some topics that we didn't get a chance to explore in detail. Our group members have also been invited to join in with the Buranda STEPS Net-

STEPS Warwick

The Warwick STEPS group started in the second week of August. We began by introducing ourselves, relating how we came to be in this program. Altogether, there were five couples, each with a partner affected by a stroke.

We compared problems that we had, and swapped ideas to overcome these or at least make them a bit easier, with realistically obtainable goals.

Our ages varied, as did our walks in life, but we all found a common bond with sharing our experiences, our ups and downs, with a desire to help each other overcome problems. Just knowing that there are others who understand what we're all going through is comforting, as we know we can talk to each other with understanding of our problems.

Our physiotherapist, Rebecca organised this program with the help of the speech pathologist, Rachelle and were aided by an occupational therapy student, Sarah. They went to great lengths to make the full program not only productive and informative but thoroughly enjoyable as well. To top it off, Rebecca organised a most enjoyable afternoon tea, provided by the hospital kitchen – great cooks, girls! – our diets flew out the window!

We had our break-up at one of the group member's home and enjoyed a lovely social afternoon made more interesting with us all enjoying looking through Rebecca's wedding album as she was recently married. All brought along lovely yummy yummies, and we loved all of it. Did I mention "diet" earlier?

At the conclusion of our course, we'd generated a real rapport between all of us, and will continue to get together. Thank you Rebecca, Rachelle and Sarah, and STEPS for implementing this program.

STEPS Cleveland

Our group started in October 2009 and met at the RD COTA building in Cleveland. Our STEPS Leaders were Ben Turner and Denice Rundle– Denice was a participant in one of the first ever STEPS Programs in 2006. Our group was quite large– 14 in total including the two leaders– there were some weeks where we struggled to fit around the table! Throughout each session, there was plenty of discussion as we progressed through the topics in the STEPS Workbook– so much so that we didn't always get through the content for each session. But for us, STEPS was about coming together and sharing our individual experiences of living after brain injury. We topped off our STEPS journey with Lunch at the beautiful Indigiscapes Gardens at Capalaba– a few of us went for a short bushwalk and then we all sat down in air-conditioned comfort to share our meals together. We have decided to keep going in 2010 and will meet on the 2nd Thursday of each month. Our first meeting is on the 11th of February 2010 at the RD COTA building– but we have plans to get out and about in Cleveland at our subsequent meetings.

STEPS Stratford

Our group was diverse. We had 3 people with ABI and 3 carers.

Everyone enjoyed the program, at first we were all tentative, but by the end we were sharing our experiences and connecting with each other. We all helped each other, offering little helpful hints about everyday living and the way we each do things. Our aim was to "assist", not solve always.

As Leaders, we enjoyed working together, despite not really knowing each other beforehand. We have different personalities, and different experiences that led us to STEPS program- Janice is an occupational therapist, Jenny is a lay leader- her son has had a brain injury. We complemented each other. One of us pays attention to detail and is calm, the other exuberant and inclusive. Co-leading was helpful.

We are hoping to do it again in 2010!

The STEPS Skills Program itself is brilliant, practical, user-friendly, presenter-friendly, and well thought out. The instructions were helpful. It affirmed my own experience of brain injury and community living.

Areti's assistance was invaluable. She gave us options for management, and the need for sensitivity and mindfulness about each participant. We were confident we could manage anything that was thrown at us, with Areti's support.

Jenny especially learnt to celebrate our successes- a great experience all around.

Jenny Sweeney and Janice Taylor

STEPS Hillcrest

The Browns Plains/Hillcrest STEPS Skills Program started towards the end of October 2009 at the Logan West Community Centre. Our leaders, Nadine Lepre from Logan Youth and Family Services and Jon Giessler who has had a stroke and has led several STEPS Program, were fabulous! We started the program with a total of 8 people and there was plenty of chatter as we each shared our stories of life after brain injury. Unfortunately, due to several reasons (work, sickness etc.) our numbers dropped over the course of the 6-week program. However, despite the size of the group, it was uplifting to hear of other people's experiences and share ideas together. Nadine and Jon were most helpful and motivating. We finished the program with a bang by attending 2 celebrations - the STEPS Christmas Party in at Roma Street Parklands and the Logan STEPS Network Group Christmas Party. We met some wonderful people at these functions and have been invited to continue joining in with the Logan STEPS Network Group meetings in 2010.

STEPS Mackay

Our group started in October 2009 and met at the Galaxy Blue Care offices in Mackay. We had three leaders: Melissa Day and Tina Soper, who both work for the Galaxy Project, and Ray Daniel who experienced a brain injury himself several years ago. With our leaders, there was about 10 people in our group. While we all turned up for the first week feeling a little uncertain about what to expect, we soon settled in and really enjoyed moving through the STEPS Program together. It was really good to be able to share our experiences together and set some goals along the way. We completed the program by attending a local lawn bowls day that was organised by Ray Daniel and the Mackay Headway Group to raise awareness of brain injury in the community (see the Network Group section for more details about the bowls day). A fabulous day was had by all! Since the bowls day, we have continued to meet to further discuss some of the topics in the STEPS workbook. In 2010, we'd like to keep meeting and have been discussing having a darts day, another bowls day and a community BBQ.

STEPS Nundah

Our Nundah STEPS group started on 22nd October 2009 at the very welcoming venue of CCRC (Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre) in Toombul.

We had some wonderful characters in our group who were able to share their stories of hope and challenges for the benefit both to themselves and the rest of the group throughout our 6 weeks, and we definitely had our fair share of laughs as well.

Whilst the group members were at very different stages in their journeys, everyone was able to appreciate and respect each others different paths and experiences of adapting within their injury or stroke. Jacinta's cakes never lasted very long after we all got our mitts on them, and were always a firm favourite.

Our final break up event was for some very tasty fish n' chips at Scarborough, and we are pleased to report our group will be gathering together again for a catch up coffee in 2010.

Cat Harwood and Jacinta Nelson

STEPS Redcliffe

We had a large group, mostly men as participants. But all the leaders were women, so this balanced the genders out a bit.

The building didn't come up to scratch first week. There were some major ramp problems, but these were fixed by Week 2.

The Leaders all got on well- Lee, Tina and myself. I was anxious about my performance as a leader. I learnt a lot and I think the group did too.

I also learnt a lot from Lee about working with groups and using the workbook.

At the Break-up Activity, we had a chance to talk about different things. It was at Redcliffe Leagues Club- nice and cool in the air-conditioning.

3 people from STEPS came to our local stroke group's Christmas party. They and others will now join our local stroke support group in Redcliffe.

STEPS has given me confidence to speak up about things in the local area.

I didn't think I could do it. I'm glad I did. I'd like to do it again.

Cherie Carter and Lee McNeill

STEPS Riverview

Our group started in October 2009 and met at the Riverview Neighbourhood House – we were the first STEPS Program to be held in the Ispwich area! In total, there were 9 of us and while we all came from different backgrounds, we came together as we shared our individual stories of life after brain injury. There was plenty of chatter and laughter as we shared our successes, failures and challenges. We completed the STEPS Skills Program with a lunch at the Goodna RSL, but we enjoyed the journey so much so that we have decided to keep meeting. In 2010, we'll be catching up on the 2nd Tuesday of each month with our first meeting in February at the Squealing Pig (Federal) Hotel on the 9th of February.

STEPS Acacia Ridge

STEPS was a good opportunity to get to discuss topics more specifically and share some new ideas with each other

Our 6 participants are all members of the Acacia Ridge Younger Persons Stroke Support Group, so they all knew each other a bit already.

STEPS was a good opportunity to get to discuss topics more specifically and share some new ideas with each other.

We met at the Stroke Association of Queensland office, so it was handy for everyone to get there. Some members' confidence with driving improved during the program, which was great progress to share, right before our very eyes!

Our break-up activity was yum cha at Landmark Restaurant, recommended by Leonie. On the day, she took charge of ordering and what a wonderful job she did! The restaurant was huge, and busy, busy, busy and the food was delicious (see empty plates in photo!), except for one gelatinous coconut dessert-the jury is still out on that.

STEPS Network Groups

STEPS Headway Mackay

On Sunday the 29th of November 2009, Headway Mackay held a lawn bowls day at the Mackay Bowls Club to raise awareness for brain injury in the local community. The event was the idea of Ray Daniel, who joined with Headway Mackay after completed a STEPS Skills Program in 2006. Ray is now a trained STEPS Leader and recently led a STEPS Skills Program in Mackay with staff from a local organisation called the Galaxy Project – the group used the lawn bowls day as there STEPS break-up activity.

Headway Mackay held a lawn bowls day at the Mackay Bowls Club to raise awareness for brain injury in the local community

The bowls day was a great success with over 50 people attending. Those in attendance enjoyed a few games of bowls (all of a friendly nature of course), a BBQ lunch and plenty of chatter as they shared their experiences of life after a brain injury. There were also a few raffles with prizes donated from businesses in the local community. The Acquired Brain Injury Annual Fun Day Perpetual Trophy was won by none other than Ray Daniel himself – prior to his injury, Ray was a regular on the bowling greens and it looks like he hasn't lost his touch! Other prizes to be given on the day included the different style award, the best style award, the least shots for the day award, and the first wrong bias short for the day award – sounds like a lot of fun was had by all. Plans are underway to hold the event it 2010 – it can only get bigger and better from here!

STEPS Charleville

As 2009 drew to a close, the Charleville Network Group decided it too had come to a natural end for now. A few people have moved away, others have sadly passed away and others are not enjoying good health right now.

Everyone has agreed it is the right time for the Network Group to fold. Of course, people will still run into each other in the main streets of Charleville.

The Group started back in mid-2007 and has used Bluecare Charleville as its base since then. They have enjoyed a mixture of activities: guest speakers have talked about functioning of the brain, breathing and sleep management, anxiety, grief and loss; DVDs have been used to discuss depression, goal setting and living with brain injury. Fun was also had painting silk scarfs in outback colours, leather work, visiting local gardens, a trip to the famous Cosmos Centre and the very popular kinesiology sessions. The Christmas lunch has traditionally been fabulous Thai food- the STEPS group has had to follow the chef around Charleville, as the restaurant location has changed over the years.

They have enjoyed a mixture of activities: guest speakers have talked about functioning of the brain, breathing and sleep management, anxiety, grief and loss; DVDs have been used to discuss depression, goal setting and living with brain injury.

Many thanks to Wendy for the early days, and then Anne and Sherree who have done a sterling job with the group for the past 2 years. You know the difference you have made for group members in Charleville-thanks!

STEPS Logan– Social Notes

Well folks, another giant step taken – in case you have not noticed another year is history and we have all of 2010 to look forward to.

Looking back, we, in Logan have had a very successful year, with four groups completed, and thus about 30 persons with a better prospect to their lives, and also some new Leaders emerging. One group was visited by Heidi Muenchberger, PhD MClinPsych (Neuro), Senior Research Fellow l Churchill Fellow 2009, Centre of National Research on Disability and Rehabilitation Medicine, (CONROD), Griffith Institute of Health and Medical Research, Meadowbrook, Qld., who is researching the result of STEPS in the community. The Group forfeited the program for the day and offered their bodies and minds to science as Heidi skilfully went about her research. All involved agreed it was an exhilarating and rewarding experience.

On the first Monday of each month all who have attended a Logan STEPS Group are invited to lunch together at a venue chosen the previous month.

Various local Clubs and Pubs have been chosen. At the November luncheon some goose (me) suggested that a lunch not be held in December and perhaps we wait until next year to kick off again. Boy, what a mistake. I was howled down and almost evicted for such a subversive suggestion. The venue chosen for December was the South Side Sports and Community Club at Upper Mt Gravatt, where extensive renovations have just been finished.

Ben Turner, a well known gastronomist, and STEPS Program co-ordinator also attended and fully tested the menu. Areti came along for a visit a bit later. We all enjoyed their company and hope to see them and other personnel from Buranda at our luncheon functions during 2010.

Whilst the cuisine at these functions is always well appreciated, it appears to me that probably the greatest benefit is the camaraderie shared by all those in attendance. One must remember, we are just a bunch of strangers drawn together by a common affliction to ourselves or to loved ones. Together we have overcome this affliction to the best of our ability and greatly improved our look in life, and, most importantly, meet these strangers, and then developed some deep and lasting friendships.

The Logan Groups and Leaders thanks go out to Areti and Ben and also to the Buranda office personnel for their strong leadership, help and advice throughout the year. We know we can count on you all in the future. Also thanks for the cracker Xmas party in the Roma Street Parklands.

Looking back, we, in Logan have had a very successful year, with four groups completed, and thus about 30 persons with a better prospect to their lives

All the best to every reader for a bonza 2010!!. If I have forgotten anything, please forgive me, for you see, I have suffered a stroke.

John Enright.

Please note that the first meeting for the Logan STEPS Network group in 2010 will be on the 1st of February at the Logan Village Hotel – all are welcome to attend. The Logan STEPS Network Group will also be holding a drop-in chat group on the 3rd Monday of each months throughout 2010 with the first meeting on 15th of February 2010 at the Logan North Library – once again, all are welcome to attend.

STEPS Bundaberg

Bundaberg Brain Injury Friends Support Group continues with its monthly get-togethers in various places. In October, it was a "coffee and chat" morning at a coffee shop. Here they are, pausing from their chat to pose for a photo!

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.

GROUP SITES	MEETING DETAILS	CONTACT DETAILS
Warwick	TBA for 2010	Areti Kennedy **ph. 3406 2311**
Mackay (combined with Headway group)	2-monthly meetings at various local venues	Anne Jennings **ph. 4968 3823**
Bundaberg	Monthly meetings, 4th Wednesday of month, 1:00-3:00pm at Bundaberg Neighbourhood Centre, or various community locations.	Leanne Curtis **ph. 4155 2303**
Innisfail	Monthly meetings, 3rd Monday of month at Healthier Great Green Way, 180 Edith St	Raylene McSwan **ph. 4063 3742**
Logan North	Monthly meetings, 1st Monday of month, at various community locations	John Enright **ph. 3342 5820**
Logan Drop-in Chat Group	3rd Monday of month, 10:00am-12noon, Logan North Library, cnr Sports Drive and Springwood Rd, Underwood	John Enright **ph. 3342 5820**
Buranda	Monthly meetings, 1st Wednesday of month, 10am-12pm-venue alternates between ABIOS and a community setting.	Sue Wright **ph. 3406 2311**
Pine Rivers	Monthly meetings, 3rd Wednesday of month, 10am-12pm at Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre	Sue Wright **ph. 3406 2311**
Redcliffe	Monthly meetings, 2nd Wednesday of month, 10:00am-12noon at Redcliffe Leagues Club, cnr Klingner and Ashmore Rds, Redcliffe, or various community locations	Cherie Carter **ph. 3284 6839**
Ipswich	Monthly meetings, 2nd Tuesday of month, 10:00am-12noon at Riverview Neighbourhood House, 138 Old Ipswich Road, Riverview, or various local venues	Ben Turner **Ph. 3406 2311**
Cleveland	Monthly meetings, 2nd Thursday of each month at various local venues	Denice Rundle **ph. 3823 4851** Ben Turner **Ph. 3406 2311**
Acacia Ridge (combined with stroke support group)	Weekly meetings, Mondays 10:00am- 12noon, Acacia Ridge Community Centre, Hanify St, Acacia Ridge	David Firth **ph. 0411 501641**

STEPS Christmas Party News

We will bring you all the news from the Brisbane, Cairns and other STEPS Christmas Parties in the March 2010 newsletter

STEPS Leader Network

November STEPS Leader Teleconference

The last STEPS Leaders Teleconference was held on 25 November 2009 with the focus being leader reflections. Three STEPS Leaders; Jenny Sweeney from Cairns, Ray Daniel from Mackay, and Jenni-Lee Rees from Rockhampton, provided reflections about their experiences with the STEPS Program. Jenny's son sustained a brain injury about 13 years ago. She became involved with STEPS because she was concerned about the lack of options available to people with brain injury in the community. Ray Daniel experienced a brain injury in 2005 and was a participant in a STEPS Program in 2007 – he said doing the program helped him get back on his feet and was the motivating factor behind him becoming a STEPS Leader. Jenni-Lee is a Speech Pathologist in the Rehabilitation Unit at Rockhampton Hospital – she has run several STEPS Skills Programs and commented that she enjoys the strong community focus of STEPS. All 3 Leaders had some very good advice for new STEPS Leaders:

Jenny – Have a go, just do it. But be yourself. Be real. Don't be afraid to tell the truth, and not put a happy gloss on everything, both for yourself and for the participants. This carries a better message about real life.

Ray – don't be shy- you need to make a friendly atmosphere and lead by being energetic and engaging. This will model confidence to the group members too. Be patient- for yourself and for your group members.

Jenni-Lee – use a lot of intonation to get the information across to people, as this will help people understand more. Clarify the most important points. Enjoy the experience.

The first STEPS Leader Teleconference in 2010 will be held on 4 February.

Spotlight on.. Mackay

Mackay's City Heart has recently undergone a magical transformation

Mackay is a vibrant exciting tropical city, booming from the richness of sugar and mining. Mackay was settled in 1862, named after one Captain John Mackay who discovered the valley of the Pioneer River.

Early pioneers brought sugar cane to the region and began an industry that has become one of Australia's largest. Within a decade of settlement, Mackay became Queensland's largest sugar producing area and still is! Mackay grew with its industries. As sugar boomed so did the frontier town.

The climate and environment of the Mackay area soon attracted families and today more than 75,000 people live in Mackay. More and more "Southerners" are drawn by the promise of sunshine, warmth and relaxed family living.

Mackay's close proximity to the Great Barrier Reef and some of the world's most prized rainforests make it a holiday destination for many thousands of visitors.

Mackay's City Heart has recently undergone a magical transformation by way of a unique community arts project. Comprising of over 580 pieces of art, the overall theme depicts the environmental beauty of the Natural North.

The lush rainforests of the Pioneer Valley through to the coast, tropical islands and clear seas are all seen in the project. Other pieces include bronze animal shapes such as geckos and the Eungella Honeyeater; plaques, sculptures and terazzo and mosaic tiles. Of particular interest is a sculptured free-form seat in the shape of a "bommie" and covered in all the colours of the Great Barrier Reef.

Mackay has a Heritage Walk that will make the history of Mackay come to life. Featuring a Hotel built in 1889, the Police Station, Court House and Commonwealth Bank, all built over 100 years ago.

Mackay's Historical Court House

STEPS Leader Training

During the final quarter of 2009, STEPS staff remained very busy – STEPS Leader Training was held in 3 places – Atherton, Brisbane and Rockhampton. Planning is now underway for the leaders trained at these sites to run STEPS Skills Programs in 2010.

The first STEPS Leader Training opportunity for 2010 will be the Beaudesert STEPS Leader Training, which is to be held on 2/3 February at St Mary's Community Services in Beaudesert (6-12 Peterson Street). Those interested in attending this training need to complete a leader application form and return it to STEPS.

While further Leader Training dates for 2010 are yet to be finalised, we are working towards holding the training at many sites throughout Queensland in addition to various sites in and around Brisbane – watch this space for further updates.

STEPS

Steps get us from one place to another
Without too much bother
Whether it by our feet
One foot after t'other
Or by our feats
Which of course are of a different matter
When we are a baby
Our first steps are watched with pride and joy
But do we as a baby realise it
But when our brain acquires some damage
From a stroke or some other evil force
These second first steps
Especially by us taking them
Is also a moment of pride and joy
However there is much more to do
We must ease ourselves slowly and gently
Back into the community wide
Again more steps
For us the injured party
And for those who judge just by appearance
Think again you may be next
There is plenty of help out there
If only we know where to look
Victims survivors call us what you like
And please do not forget the Carers
Who often suffer more than anyone else
But are you aware of the third first Steps
Oddly enough it is called The Steps Program
A Queensland State Government sponsored facility
With personnel so dedicated to the cause
Of helping us Acquired Brain Damaged People
Get a grip of ourselves
And to appreciate and enjoy the next phase of our life
Their aim is to get their tentacles
Into and throughout the great State of Queensland
To educate and train volunteers
To assist the afflicted and their Carers to such a degree
That we can understand our acquired brain damage
And assist us all to lead a better happier life
All the assistance is there if you just
Call them on (07)3406 2311 if in Brissy you live
If you don't call 1300 727 403
Fax em on (07) 3406 2399
If it is clever you are
Email: STEPS@health.qld.gov.au
Rest assure
They want to help
Please assist them do their job
Trust me
I am talking from experience!

John Enright

STEPS CONTACT DETAILS

STEPS Program

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