

eyeson autism

From London with love: Kathy Lette supports children with autism

Best-Selling Australian author Kathy Lette lifted the roof at the eighth annual Lynn's Lunch, captivating an audience of more than 350 guests at the hotly anticipated event.

More than \$40,000 was raised during the course of the afternoon, with all monies donated directly to the Lynn Wright Memorial Fund, to provide financial assistance and support to families who may otherwise be unable to access AEIOU's high quality early intervention program.

Taking place at Victoria Park Complex, guests enjoyed sparkling wine courtesy of Craggy Range and two sumptuous courses along with the rare opportunity to hear from one of the country's most popular fiction writers.

Hosted by Emily-Jade O'Keeffe, tickets to the luncheon sold out early, with Lynn Wright Memorial Fund Chair Louise Morton explaining Kathy Lette is renowned for writing, and talking

about what women really think. "We were absolutely delighted to welcome Kathy to Brisbane to support the families in our centres. There is nobody else quite like Kathy in the world. Not only is she a respected social commentator, a charity supporter, and a mother who has experienced Autism Spectrum Disorder firsthand, she has a great sense of energy and wicked sense of humour," Louise said.

"Kathy also gave her time to visit our Nathan centre, where she met some of the children and saw the program being delivered. She said she felt AEIOU's service should be available to families all over the world, and it was wonderful to see her connect with the children and our team," Louise said.

Guests at the luncheon also heard from Judy Sharp, the mother of artist Tim Sharp who is an ambassador for AEIOU Foundation.



MC Emily Jade O'Keeffe and Kathy Lette



Peta-An Krogh and Kate Donnelly from Anthony's Fine Jewellery

Bundaberg's purpose-built centre now open

It's with great pleasure AEIOU Foundation announces the official opening of its new, purpose-built early intervention centre in Bundaberg. The team plans to move into the centre, which is located on the campus of CQUniversity by June, and looks forward to settling into their new surrounds.

While the centre was being constructed, AEIOU delivered its program from a temporary location, within a GoodStart Early Learning Centre.

The new centre will provide 12 full-time placements for children with autism aged between two-and-a-half and six years, and plans are underway to ensure the facility and staff can provide support to families living in surrounding areas.

AEIOU's Director of Education Diane Heaney is excited to unveil the new centre, and says that its location at CQUniversity presents tremendous

opportunities, including the prospect of research collaboration and the opportunity for students studying at the university to engage in work experience.

"Allied health and education students can engage in our world-class program, and learn from our skilled team of professionals. As a result, when entering the workforce, they will possess a unique skill set in this area."

"We've also found that students who engage in work experience with AEIOU often seek long-term employment with the Foundation once they complete their degree," Diane says.



AEIOU's Bundaberg centre is now open!

Going blue with AEIOU

In April, AEIOU encouraged the community to 'go blue' and raise awareness for autism. On page 3, you can read about how supporters from across Queensland, along with our friends, families and staff got behind the cause. Buildings turned blue all over the State alongside AEIOU, there was blue and bubble-inspired cakes, blue wigs, wristbands and even some of our canine friends got involved in the action. We send a very big thank-you to every person and every organisation that got behind the campaign and raised awareness and funds for autism.

what's on

Take a Hike Gold Coast 2 June 2013

Extraordinary views of the ocean, with a horizon that stretches on forever, sounds like the ideal way to ward off the aches and pains of a 40 kilometre challenge! Take a Hike Gold Coast is now in its second year and a group of dedicated business identities, parents, and staff from AEIOU are lacing up to hit the pavement for children in our centres. Follow their progress on Twitter and Facebook and if you want to show your support, go to aeiou.org.au/take-a-hike and make a donation.

Take a Hike Townsville 25 August 2013

Take a Hike Townsville is now in its third year and this will be the biggest and brightest yet. To keep the heat at bay, the event has been brought forward to August. AEIOU is now recruiting for participants, so if you're up for a unique challenge that will make a real, tangible difference to the lives of young children, then this could be for you! Visit aeiou.org.au/take-a-hike-townsville.

Take a Hike Brisbane 13 October 2013

Getting back to where it all started, Take a Hike Brisbane will ask business identities and local personalities in South East Queensland to dust off their sneakers and embark on a unique tour of the River City in October. The Hike will take place in the heart of Spring, taking full advantage of Brisbane's picturesque surrounds. For information about how to join the hike or to sponsor a hiker, go to our website, aeiou.org.au/take-a-hike-brisbane. Don't delay!

AEIOU Research Conference 18 to 19 November 2013

Special guest Professor Gary LaVigna, the Clinical Director of the Institute for Applied Behaviour Analysis in Los Angeles will join AEIOU Foundation for its second annual Research Conference in November. Local and national experts will reveal cutting edge research and share developments in the field of autism at the conference, which is ideal for researchers, specialist or referring practitioners, medical or allied health professionals, teachers, and students with an interest in autism. For details and to register go to aeiou.org.au today. Early bird discounts apply.

A word from our CEO

Alan Smith – CEO

Welcome to the 11th edition of Eyes on Autism. It's been a busy start to the year. Not only is our Bundaberg centre officially open, our Take a Hike Gold Coast Crew is ready to take on the annual 40 kilometre challenge. The Townsville Crew will be the next cab off the rank, followed by Brisbane.

The Chain Reaction challenge took place from 11 – 17 May, with 42 cyclists taking on a gruelling 1,000 kilometre tour over seven days in a ride which spanned from the Gold Coast to Toowoomba, and back to Brisbane. As a major beneficiary of Chain Reaction's Queensland Ride, AEIOU will allocate the funds raised towards a new and long-awaited purpose-built centre at the Gold Coast.

On the topic of events and fundraising, it was with great privilege to welcome Kathy Lette to AEIOU in March, and to speak at the annual Lynn's Lunch event. It turned out to be one of Brisbane's most sought after lunch events, and tickets sold out quickly. Our Bubble Day Carnival was a wonderful way to celebrate the end of Autism Awareness Month, and Paddle for Kids remained a popular event on the day.

AEIOU is committed to the growth and development of its program. Our team has been investigating opportunities to provide greater support to regional families, and plans for interstate expansion remain underway. Our education department has also prioritised the manualisation of our curriculum, which will continue to ensure consistency in our evidence-based program delivery across all centres as AEIOU grows.

It's been a pleasure to watch the children in our centres flourish, and learn new skills with the expert guidance and support from our team and of course, their families. That's the thing about autism and early intervention: every little step counts, and it's often the achievements others take for granted which are celebrated at AEIOU. That might be receiving strong eye contact, understanding instructions, being able to get dressed into a pair of pyjamas, being toilet trained, or hearing a child's voice for the first time.

If you would like to help a child with autism this year, please support AEIOU's annual Tax Appeal. You can donate online, or by completing the slip at the back of this newsletter and returning it to us in the provided reply paid envelope.

By supporting AEIOU to deliver early intervention, you are directly making a difference to a child's life. In each edition of Eyes on Autism we feature family stories. You can flick to page 10 and 11 to hear from parents whose children have benefited from our program.

For more information about AEIOU Foundation and the children we care for, please visit our website, aeiou.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Smith
CEO



The art of collaboration: connecting communities to celebrate Autism Awareness Month

Queensland truly shone in April, with many of the State's most iconic buildings and bridges lighting up blue for Autism Awareness Month in partnership with AEIOU.

In addition to this, 32 libraries from across the State encouraged understanding and awareness by hosting special awareness displays and story times that celebrated difference, and many local schools, individuals and community organisations got behind AEIOU, showing their unwavering support.

To coincide with International Autism Awareness Day on Tuesday April 2, AEIOU Foundation launched its fundraising and awareness campaign with a morning tea at the State Library of Queensland. The morning tea included delicious and artfully created cupcakes baked by AEIOU Speech Pathologist Rebecca Mead, inspired by the Foundation's campaign.

With AEIOU Ambassador Ian Skippen as master of ceremonies, AEIOU welcomed a number of special guests at the event, including newly appointed AEIOU Ambassador and Olympic Swimmer Thomas Fraser-Holmes, Councillor Geraldine Knapp, AEIOU board members Peter Kelly and Euan Morton, as well as the children and families from AEIOU's centres

Tracey Thompson, whose son Cohen became the 'face' of AEIOU's Autism Awareness Month, delivered a heartfelt speech about her family's personal experience, and Cohen's positive transformation through early intervention. The launch concluded with a fantastic interactive story with Youth Week's Top Secret Story Tellers Clubhouse, performing the award winning children's book 'Isabella's Garden' and delighting the children.

This year, AEIOU took its partnership in the global Light it up Blue campaign to a new level, engaging supporters in Townsville, Toowoomba

and the Gold Coast as well as Brisbane. For the first week of April, the Wheel of Brisbane spun blue, and the William Jolly Bridge was brightly adorned by a specially commissioned artwork by AEIOU Ambassador Tim Sharp. The Kurilpa Bridge turned blue for a full fortnight, and the Treasury Casino turned its support on for the entire month of April.

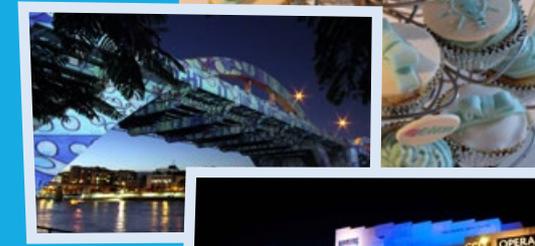
To complete Autism Awareness Month, the Queensland Performing Arts Centre turned blue. Further abroad, the Gold Coast Arts Centre, Jupiters Casino Townsville and the Empire Theatre in Toowoomba lit up blue from 1-6 April. AEIOU is delighted with the support from these partners, which helped Queensland join a global network of 9,000 buildings and landmarks, in 93 countries and 750 cities on seven continents to raise unprecedented global awareness for autism.

Buildings weren't the only thing going blue for Autism Awareness Month. All nine AEIOU centres went blue, inviting parents and families to take part in "blue days" with themed morning teas and barbecues (featuring adventurous and delicious blue treats), dressing up in blue, and taking part in special sensory activities. This was echoed in the wider community with unprecedented support and interactivity online with many people sharing stories and conversations via social media about how they would go blue for Autism Awareness Month, with even their pets getting involved!

AEIOU extends its gratitude to Brisbane City Council, and each of its Light it up Blue partners, along with ambassadors, supporters, families, workplaces, AEIOU staff and Board members who got involved and showed support for families of children with autism. Together our collective efforts shone a bright light on autism in the month of April.



Our centres embraced Autism Awareness Month, hosting blue-day parties and celebrations with the children and families in our centres



This year, buildings and bridges across Queensland turned blue with AEIOU to raise awareness

Townsville turns it on

This year, Townsville turned up its support of AEIOU Foundation and children with autism. Townsville City Libraries hosted a tremendous story time session, welcoming up to 70 local families, including 10 children and their parents from AEIOU's Townsville centre. There, Children and Youth Services Librarian Shan Boller encouraged children to understand the unique qualities every person has, and the different challenges, and also the strengths a child with autism might have. She read playful stories to celebrate being different, including the *Blue Gnu*, and *Where is the Green Sheep?* before children had the opportunity to sing songs and create their own blue-inspired artworks.

Townsville Library Services Executive Manager Susan Coker said she was thrilled to support Autism Awareness Month. "We were delighted with the day, and the opportunity to host this wonderful celebration. The *Blue Gnu* is about a character named Boo, who revels in being the one and only blue gnu in the world. But when he meets another blue gnu, he strives to find himself by trying to change his colours and appearance," Ms Coker said. "Blue is recognised internationally as the colour for autism, and the story was chosen to symbolise a celebration of difference and acceptance."

In addition, local schools including St Joseph's in Mundingburra hosted 'Go Blue with AEIOU' days, where children wore blue clothes and made a gold coin donation, and also had the chance to purchase AEIOU's 'break the bubble of autism' wristbands.

Jupiters Townsville put North Queensland on the world map, lighting up blue for the first week of April for the first time. To close out the month, more than 100 local supporters, including current and past families from the Townsville centre got together for a special BBQ celebration at Dan Gleeson Park, where they dined on blue sausages, blue onions and blue sweet treats.



The Townsville community supports AEIOU and children with autism



Dr Gary LaVigna will visit Brisbane for AEIOU's annual Research Conference



Professor Rita Jordan (centre) with AEIOU's Research and Psychology Manager Dr Jessica Paynter and CEO Alan Smith at the 2012 conference

World class research conference

From Monday 18 November 2013, AEIOU will host a two-day national Autism Research Forum. This is the second annual conference event, and it will be hosted at Griffith University's Mount Gravatt Campus. The conference follows a hugely successful inaugural event at South Bank Institute of Technology in 2012.

Up to 300 delegates are expected to attend the 2013 Autism Research Forum, which will feature special guest Professor Gary LaVigna, Clinical Director of the Institute for Applied Behaviour Analysis in Los Angeles. Professor LaVigna has gained international acclaim through his work on Positive Behaviour Support (PBS), several co-written books including: *Progress Without Punishment* and the *Periodic Service Review: A Total Quality Assurance System for Human Services and Education*.

The event will showcase cutting edge research and development in the field of autism, inviting international experts to discuss topics including the American Psychological Association's (APA) extensive development process of the fifth edition of the psychiatrics' handbook, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)*. Revision and planning for the DSM-5 had been underway for more than 14 years, with its release planned for May 2013.

AEIOU's Research and Psychology Manager Dr Jessica Paynter said there will be comprehensive discussions about the new information released in the DSM-5 at the conference.

"This is the first time that sensory processing difficulties, such as hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual

interest in sensory aspects of environment have been included as a potential symptom for diagnosis," Dr Paynter said. "Examples of this include apparent indifference to pain, or to heat and cold, adverse responses to specific sounds or textures, excessive smelling or touching of objects and fascination with lights or spinning objects."

"We are very much looking forward to discussing the new research and improvements made to the DSM-5 and how they will aid practitioners in the diagnosis of ASD," Dr Paynter said.

The forum will provide unique insight that will specifically benefit medical practitioners, Allied Health Professionals, researchers, educators who work with children with ASD and students with an interest in ASD. Early bird registrations open now.

Bistro One Eleven lunch raises \$130,000

On 17 February, 100 guests enjoyed an exquisite luncheon hosted by Mary-Jeanne Hutchinson of Craggy Range Wines at Brisbane's chic Bistro One Eleven restaurant. Guests were treated to a wine tasting featuring a selection of top-shelf wines and were among the first in the city to experience a decadent three course lunch at the highly anticipated restaurant with celebrated chef Phillip Johnson and his team. On the day, more than \$130,000 was raised for children with autism attending AEIOU's program. This was an extraordinary result, and will help to fund the operational costs for up to 15 child placements at an AEIOU centre for one year. We would like to extend our gratitude to Mary-Jeanne Hutchinson, Phillip Johnson, Mary and Terry Peabody, Craggy Range, Lloyd Donaldson, Fredric Mairesse, Samantha and Mitchell Ogilvie and Kylie Mitchell-Smith for their generous donations of auction items.



AEIOU is now taking enrolments for 2014

Enrolments now open

AEIOU Foundation is now taking enrolments. Each of our centres will host several Open Days during August, and you will have an opportunity to visit your nearest centre to witness the program first hand and meet our team. If you, or somebody you know, has received a recent diagnosis and you would like to know more about our program, this is a great opportunity to enjoy an informal visit.

The Open Days also present a perfect opportunity to explore the program for members from local community groups or child care workers who have an interest in autism. In addition, autism advisors, general practitioners, referring specialists and therapists who would like to know more about how AEIOU operates and how it may support children with ASD can benefit from visiting a centre.

Details will be available on our website by the end of June. Registration is essential, and if you can't make it on the designated day, you are welcome to make an appointment for another time.



AEIOU thanks Mary-Jeanne Hutchinson (below, right) and Bistro One Eleven for raising funds and awareness for the Foundation and the children it cares for





Image: Warren Jopson



Chain Reaction cyclists visited AEIOU's Toowoomba centre



Chain Reaction: a cycling challenge

On Saturday, 11 May 2013, 42 cyclists embarked on an extraordinary journey, to master Queensland's rugged regional terrain in just seven days, while raising funds for children's charities. This was the third ride in Queensland in as many years with cyclists raising funds and awareness for AEIOU Foundation and the Children's Health Foundation, along with a number of other local charities.

The challenge takes place all over Australia, in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland, with the cycling event bringing together business executives who have a passion for cycling and an awareness of their corporate social responsibilities. The riders were supported by seasoned professional, Emma Carney, who joined the ride to motivate and inspire cyclists during the course of the journey. Emma is a two time world champion triathlete.

AEIOU's Board Director Euan Morton took part in the challenge for the first time this

year, riding for his nephew Andrew and the children at AEIOU centres. The tour included a stopover at AEIOU's Toowoomba centre where cyclists had a chance to meet the children they are supporting on the ride, and see how the program works.

Cyclists began the journey at Broadbeach at the Gold Coast, and travelled across the South East Queensland countryside before finishing in Brisbane.

Chain Reaction was founded in 2007 by Berrick Wilson, after his daughter Milla, who was just two days old, was rushed to hospital with a brain haemorrhage.

Over the weeks that Berrick and his wife, Caroline, spent at the Newborn Intensive Care Unit at the Monash Medical Centre, they benefitted from quality care and attention from all the medical staff. What seemed obvious to the couple, was that even in Australia's major capital cities, more can be done to help children who are sick, or need support to reach their full potential.

After Milla's full recovery, the experience drove Berrick to do something that would allow people in a similar position to himself to assist sick and hospitalised children. As a result Chain Reaction was founded.

Since the first ride in 2007 Chain Reaction has raised over \$8.5 million on behalf of its charity partners.

Chain Reaction supports a number of major beneficiaries including the Starlight Foundation, Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, AEIOU Foundation and the Children's Health Foundation. It also gives to a number of smaller children's charities.

AEIOU congratulates the cyclists who completed the Queensland challenge including AEIOU Board Director Euan Morton, and would like to thank each of the participants for their support.

For more information about Chain Reaction go to www.chain-reaction.org.au.

Supporting our families

On Saturday 13 April, AEIOU hosted an information session designed specifically for families who have received a recent diagnosis and are on the Foundation's waitlist for enrolment.

Director of Education Diane Heaney, and Parent Liaison and Fees Coordinator Katrina Ives hosted the free seminar, which welcomed nearly 20 families from South East Queensland.

The history of AEIOU was shared, along with information about what happens during any given day at AEIOU – including how the program works, what happens in the classroom and beyond. Diane and Katrina also shared new information to assist families access government rebates, fee information and advice on accessing the community. In addition to this, families received helpful tips to manage behaviour at home.

Parents were given an opportunity to share their own experiences and ask questions. AEIOU anticipates the sessions will be held quarterly. To enquire, email info@aeiou.org.au.

New playground at Camira

On Tuesday 5 March 2013, AEIOU Foundation had the pleasure of unveiling a new playground at the Camira centre, which was made possible following a donation from The Chain Reaction Challenge Foundation's 2012 Queensland cycling initiative.

AEIOU received a \$34,000 donation from the charitable organisation, after being nominated as a minor beneficiary in the 2012 bike challenge.

The playground provides children with an opportunity to play in a safe environment and practice their new skills, including turn-taking, requesting, imaginative play and social interaction, and outdoor activities that encourage free play, helping children engage with their environment. The playground will also assist children to develop gross motor skills and improve balance.

A commemorative plaque recognises the contribution of the Chain Reaction and cyclists from the 2012 ride as instrumental in its development.

Partner at Holding Redlich Brisbane, and Chairman of the Chain Reaction Committee Queensland, Michael Byrom said delivering funding to fulfil tangible projects such as the AEIOU program is one of Chain Reaction's fundamental goals.

"Now in 2013 we aim to raise significant funds for our major children's charity partners, including AEIOU Foundation," Mr Byrom said. "Chain Reaction is delighted to be working toward a second year partnership with AEIOU to deliver an ambitious capital build on the Gold Coast in 2014. It's a goal worthy of both the fundraising and cycling effort of our teams".



In March, AEIOU unveiled a new playground at Camira, made possible with thanks to the funds raised by the Chain Reaction Challenge in the 2012 event

Centre news



“Today was good. Today was fun. Tomorrow is another one.” – Dr. Seuss

It's been a busy start to the year for our centres. Along with delivering high quality education and therapy support to the children we care for, each of the centres also focus on helping families to access their communities. We teach important skills in the centre, before practicing them at different locations. This has been helped in Toowoomba, with the centre receiving a substantial grant from the Department of Education and Training, enabling them to install an exciting and challenging new playground for the children to develop gross motor skills and play skills in a safe environment. This helps ensure that when a child is at a community park, and sharing equipment with unfamiliar people, they have the foundation skills to take turns, make requests and manage any anxieties they might experience.

Centre Manager Sally Yin says that in the few weeks following the installation of the playground, children were quickly developing confidence and learning new skills, and simply loving their playground!

At the Gold Coast, the children and their parents were joined by our team to visit the All Abilities Playground at Broadbeach. They had a wonderful day, and enjoyed exploring exciting equipment and practicing their peer interaction and play skills. At the same time, the parents enjoyed the added opportunity to get to know each other better.

The Nathan centre enjoyed a special visit from local fire fighters in March, with the opportunity to learn about how they serve the community. Children were able to sit in the fire truck, and have a turn of the fire hose and wear a fire fighter's helmet. The children were visibly entertained by the experience, and the fire fighters turned the lights and siren on when they were driving away.

The children at Bray Park enjoyed a similar experience with a visit from the Fire Brigade, to teach children about community helpers, giving them an opportunity to see how the siren works, and to see the centre staff dressing up in fire fighting suits.

Last but not least, our Sippy Downs centre celebrated Harmony Day on Thursday 21 March, celebrating cultural respect with a message of 'Everyone Belongs'. The theme this year was 'Many Stories, one Australia' and the children from the Stingray Room enjoyed lots of orange-themed activities throughout the day.

This is just a small snippet of what happens across our centres in addition to our learning and therapy program, with plans already underway for the second half of the year.



Nathan centre celebrates milestones

There are four classrooms at AEIOU's Nathan Centre and the team has celebrated a number of special milestones in the first part of the year. Here's a quick overview!

Koala's Room: In this room, children are showing great progress in their imitation skills, and the team has heard many new words for the first time, such as "Grandma and Poppa".

Kookaburra's Room: The children are settling in well and loving circle times, especially the ability to use the interactive whiteboard to help build new imitation skills.

Wallabies Room: Each week, the children learn about a new letter. They have been enjoying the task of finding different objects that start with that particular letter and learning to make its sound with the chance to speak into a microphone.

Wombat's Room: The children astounded the staff when they all sat on the mat with crossed legs and sang "Good Morning" to the teacher together for the first time.



Letter of the week in the Wombat's Room



Practicing 'matching' in the Wallabies Room

A book review: The Panicosaurus

Footprint Books regularly donates books to AEIOU Foundation's learning library, and in each newsletter, a member from our education team takes the time to review one of those resources.

For this newsletter edition, AEIOU's Camira Centre Manager, Amy Harding reviewed 'The Panicosaurus'. Amy has always had interest in working with children and using positive behaviour support methods. She studied a Bachelor of Education, majoring in special education and has been working with children with autism since 2006. She joined AEIOU Foundation in January 2010 as a teacher, before taking on a managerial role in 2011.

THE BOOK:

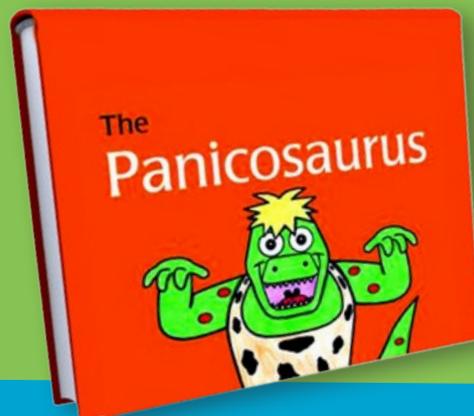
The Panicosaurus –
Managing anxiety in children
including those with ASD

"*The Panicosaurus* begins with a section pitched to parents or carers explaining anxiety in children with autism and the science behind it. Following this is the story of Mabel and two dinosaurs, the Panicosaurus and the Smartosaurus. The use of relatable characters, simple plot, easy to understand analogies and great illustrations make this suitable for primary aged children with autism as well as their peers.

The character Mabel learns to manage her anxiety with a wide repertoire of strategies, including anything from singing

to incorporating relaxation techniques that would fit in any classroom environment. This makes it a great tool for teachers. The book concludes with a long list of potential strategies to suit a range of individuals but is particularly aimed at children with Asperger's syndrome. What I like most about this book is the fact that it presents the potential to adapt these strategies for children of all ages, including those with or without autism. For that reason I'd recommend *The Panicosaurus* to anyone who is starting out on managing anxiety in children."

– Amy Harding



New autism handbook now available!

The new edition of the Australian Autism Handbook, by Benison O'Reilly and Kathryn Wicks is now available in store and online. The essential resource guide for autism spectrum disorder aims to provide key information and act as a helpful and hopeful resource to families who have a child who has been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Staff in profile: Renia Cuddy

Renia is a full-time learning facilitator at AEIOU's Bray Park centre, and also dedicates one day per week in AEIOU's central office as a Work Place Health and Safety Project Officer.

Renia, who joined AEIOU in July 2011 after hearing about the centre and AEIOU's program from a family she had been working with, says she loves working with the children and watching them grow and learn.

"I've worked in childcare throughout my entire career, but I feel like it's my calling to work at AEIOU. It's very rewarding to teach a child the skills they need to communicate and the ability to interact with their families and make friends," Renia says.

"We have a wonderful, close knit team and we all work together to share strategies and ideas to best support the children in our centre."

Renia is also dedicated to raising awareness and funds for AEIOU Foundation, and has taken to the water and to dry land to support the children in the program. She has participated in the Paddle for Kids relay race in 2012 and 2013, and also taken on the Take a Hike Challenge in Brisbane and Toowoomba, with plans already in place to join the Gold Coast and Townsville Take a Hike crews in 2013.

Meet Vinnie, Brisbane's pint-sized Picasso

In April, people all over Australia were talking about Vinnie Macris, a three year old boy who has an extraordinary talent. Vinnie, who has been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) hosted his first solo exhibition at C Gallery in Fortitude Valley on Thursday April 4, 2013, featuring 30 pieces from a collection entitled 'Wonderful Spectrum'. C Gallery owner and curator Troy Williams says Vinnie's abstract works are remarkable for his age, and he wanted to stage the exhibition to raise awareness for autism.

Funds raised at the exhibition were donated to Vinnie to assist him in the future, with a percentage also donated to

AEIOU Foundation, to support other young children with autism to reach their full potential.

More than 20 pieces were sold during the opening night, with more than 250 people in attendance, vying for an opportunity to witness Vinnie's works and meet his family.

On the night, the guests joined in the celebration of Vinnie's third birthday.

AEIOU thanks Summa Shing, Leon Macris and Vinnie Macris for supporting AEIOU, along with Troy Williams and the guests who joined the event.



Vinnie amazed the nation with his extraordinary talent, and his first exhibition coincided with his third birthday



Renia Cuddy (left) actively supports AEIOU, in the classroom and beyond!

AEIOU welcomes new Ambassador

Olympic swimming champion Thomas Fraser-Holmes is committed to making a difference to the lives of young children with autism, signing on to become an official Ambassador for AEIOU Foundation.

Thomas has a personal connection to autism, and is keenly aware of the challenges children with the condition experience, as well as the impact autism can have on a family unit.

In his role as Ambassador, Thomas will be a strong advocate for what we do at AEIOU, participating in AEIOU events and fundraising initiatives.

Thomas said he is pleased to have the opportunity to 'give back' to his community, both as an individual and as a leading sportsman. "I'm thrilled to work with AEIOU and to advocate for the Foundation," Thomas said.

"This is a cause that is close to my heart and close to my family so I am really looking forward to supporting the children at AEIOU and hopefully make a difference."

Thomas made a special visit to AEIOU's Nathan centre in April to meet the children in the program and the staff, while also gaining new insight into the curriculum and the type of support it provides to families.

He also took part in the Autism Awareness Month launch event AEIOU hosted at the State Library of Queensland.

Thomas, 21, is based on the Gold Coast and is a member of the Australian Olympic Swimming Team. He performed in the London Olympic Games in 2012. His current Australian ranking is 1st in 200 metre Freestyle, and 1st in 400 metre Individual Medley (IM). Tom's current world ranking is 4th in 400 metre freestyle, and 2nd in 400 metre IM, also holding the Commonwealth Record.

At the time of print, our Gold Coast children and staff were planning a special morning tea for Thomas, upon his return from the National Titles, to celebrate his stellar efforts in the pool and wish him well for the World Championships at the end of July.



Thomas Fraser-Holmes supports AEIOU Foundation and children with autism

Riding high at Cavalia

More than 75 families had the opportunity to see the internationally acclaimed equestrian theatrical production Cavalia, which delighted parents and children alike. At AEIOU, we strive to support community experiences and we were delighted to be able to give our families the opportunity to see Cavalia, a world class show. AEIOU extends its gratitude to Brisbane Airport Corporation for its sponsorship and support for families who have children with autism.

"I would like to say a huge thank you to AEIOU Foundation who yesterday afternoon made my gorgeous little girl, Portia's, dream come true, by giving us a double pass to Cavalia. It was so amazing and I don't know what I loved the most: the spectacular show or the amazement and excitement on my daughter's face... Portia didn't miss a second of the show. She clapped the hardest, cheered the loudest and had the biggest smile. I am so blessed and proud to have this gorgeous little girl. Autism certainly changed my life, but I would not change a single thing about Portia."

– Melissa Hayward

Sponsor profile: Brisbane Airport Corporation

Brisbane Airport Corporation is generously supporting AEIOU Foundation in 2013. Showing its commitment to building strong and active relationships with the wider community, Brisbane Airport Corporation has helped AEIOU raise funds and awareness by hosting pop-up promotional stands and giving AEIOU families the opportunity to enjoy social experiences, donating 150 tickets to see the sought after Cavalia production. They also graciously donated a month of complimentary advertising space on the international billboard which will expose AEIOU to the global stage.

AEIOU is one of several charities that Brisbane Airport Corporation supports, through financial and in-kind donations. Brisbane Airport Corporation is the operator of Brisbane Airport, the premier gateway to Queensland. More than 420 unique businesses are also located at the airport offering services such as freight and aircraft handling, warehousing, transport and communications, manufacturing, research, property and infrastructure development, education and training, recreation, tourism, leisure and retail. At the heart of operations, Brisbane Airport Corporation values building collaborative relationships, being proactive and innovative, acting with integrity and commitment, and providing service excellence.



Brisbane Airport Corporation is supporting AEIOU Foundation



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



Toowoomba troops rally for Take a Hike

What a cracking group of people! This year, we tipped the scale of Take a Hike Toowoomba, when 100 local personalities and business identities laced up to hike 40 kilometres and raise funds and awareness for children with autism. Together, the crew raised more than \$65,000, which is simply an incredible feat – and resulted in the most successful Take a Hike Toowoomba event to date.

It was all done with the expert guidance of Executive Excellence, who not only led the group on the day, but facilitated an eight-week training program to ensure everyone was ship-shape for the hike.

AEIOU is very proud to be part of the Toowoomba community, which time and time again proves to demonstrate its support for those who are in need.

A special mention goes to Russell Stack, Team Simon Harris Black, Team McNab, The A Team, Brenda Rangott, Sally Rigney-Vaughan and of course Les Perkin and The Andys, for achieving outstanding fundraising efforts. We also thank our sponsors, Hyundai and The Chronicle.



Join the Take a Hike team today and make a difference in your community

Calling on Townsville & Brisbane recruits

We want you! If you're seeking a challenge of physical and mental endurance that will make a direct impact on your community, now is the time to sign up to Take a Hike.

AEIOU provides Townsville's largest full-time and part-time early intervention program, and the funds and awareness you raise by being part of this initiative will have a direct impact on the families we support.

Last year, 50 local community members stepped out in Townsville. This year we're seeking to increase that number, and raise up to \$75,000.

The Brisbane Hike takes place on Sunday 13 October, and recruitment is already underway.

AEIOU is grateful for sponsorship from Hyundai for providing the event support vehicles for each of the Take a Hike events across Queensland this year.

Remember, Take a Hike is not a race – participants start and finish as a group. Walking the distance is a challenge for anyone regardless of their fitness levels. To help hikers prepare for the challenge a pre-event training program is provided. The program, delivered by Executive Excellence includes an eight-week self-guided program with two supervised sessions per week to ensure all participants are well prepared.

Training for the Townsville event commences on Monday 1 July, and signing up for both challenges is easy. Just go to aeiou.org.au/take-a-hike and select your region.



The Toowoomba community to Take a Hike to a new level



Bubble Day and Paddle for Kids

The fourth annual AEIOU Bubble Day Carnival, which included the popular kayak relay race Paddle for Kids made a huge splash in April. Crystal clear skies made it a spectacular event at Kangaroo Point's Captain Burke Park, with much fun to be had on water and dry land. It was a show of great community support, colour and fun with hundreds of locals, sponsors, friends, families and staff revelling in the sunshine on the day.

More than 24 teams raced in the popular kayak relay event Paddle for Kids. All contestants paddled fiercely but it was Team Bam Bam who took out first place, winning the prestigious Golden Paddle award. We also congratulate the best dressed team Rock the Boat, and our highest fundraising teams, The Warrior Mums and Team Pacific. More than \$20,900 was raised on the day with thanks to everyone's support.

Everyone enjoyed freshly brewed coffee, delicious savoury and sweet treats, a great BBQ, and cold drinks, while enjoying the blue skies and autumn sun. A big thanks to the students from St Laurence's College and Lourdes Hill College who cooked up a storm and kept the sausages pumping on the BBQ throughout the day. There was also the opportunity to get pampered with a "go blue for autism" manicure with nail art by Urbane Nail Design, which is owned by AEIOU parent Juanita Lillis-Crepe.

AEIOU extends thanks to our sponsors Riverlife and Blue Sky Coffee, all our volunteers from St Laurence's College, Lourdes Hill College, Volunteering Gold Coast, AEIOU staff and families and everyone who attended AEIOU's Bubble Day Carnival and made it a day to be remembered.

Bubble Day at Captain Burke Park captured the imagination of AEIOU's families, friends and supporters



A family story



Cohen is transitioning to school this year

About Cohen

By Tracey Thompson

I was so happy to be able to join AEIOU Foundation at the Autism Awareness Month launch event.

I, like most people, remember dates that have impacted our lives: anniversaries, birthdays or a holiday. But one date had a greater impact on my family's life than I could ever have imagined – that date was February 17, 2012. This was when our paediatrician sat opposite us and told us that Cohen was autistic.

I'll admit I went through the entire range of emotions. Guilt: had I done something wrong during pregnancy? Anger: why hadn't we done something sooner? And sadness: what did the future hold for our little boy? Eventually I had a 'light bulb' moment and realised that this is the same happy and healthy little boy that we absolutely adored, and it was our job to do everything that we could, and within our powers for him.

Our paediatrician armed us with pages of information, including websites and phone numbers, and with the help from an Autism Advisor we started researching and making some calls, which led us on the journey to AEIOU.

Another date: April 16 2012. This was Cohen's first day at AEIOU and a very emotional one for everyone. As a parent you want the best for your kids and in my opinion AEIOU is the best. Without them I don't know where we would be today. Our only regret is that every child with a diagnosis isn't given access to attend such an incredible facility. Without the love and support from the amazing staff, there would be no way we would be in the position to see Cohen transitioning into prep at a mainstream school full-time by July. This time last year ago we would have considered this to be nothing more than a pipedream, but it is our reality and it is all because of AEIOU.

The kids at AEIOU work so hard to overcome simple things that we all take for granted. Like having a haircut or being able to go into a shopping centre without a meltdown, which to 'Joe Public' looks like a tantrum but may have been caused by something as simple as entering through a different door. These reactions to simple changes to routine are much harder to predict and the staff at AEIOU deal with these issues every day and educate us as parents on strategies, and support us to help our kids, and that is invaluable.

Parents of children with ASD learn to savour what my husband and I refer to as 'little victories', such as when Cohen said his ABCs for the first time, put his pyjamas on by himself (even if they were back to front) and said his name, when asked by Santa. These probably don't seem like a big deal to most people, but because of early intervention programs like the one offered by AEIOU, these little victories are becoming more and more frequent. Cohen is a perfect example of why these types of programs are so important.

We are so proud of the little person that Cohen has become and AEIOU has played a major role in that. We were so thrilled when we were asked about Cohen's image being used for the Autism Awareness Month campaign and we are so grateful at being given the opportunity to publicly say thank-you to AEIOU Foundation.



A family story



Jaida and Maddie transitioned to school in January 2013, where they are enjoying making friends and learning new skills

About Jaida and Maddie

By Heidi Pont

Jaida and Maddie are five years old. They joined AEIOU's Gold Coast centre in January 2011, after receiving an autism diagnosis in November 2010. While it was a surprise, I had somewhat suspected the girls might have autism. Maddie and Jaida weren't speaking yet, and they didn't walk until quite late. When they did, they were quite unsteady on their feet. Small hiccups would turn into a disaster – if one of the girls was given the wrong cup to drink out of, they would have an emotional meltdown. Still, it was difficult to diagnose, because everyone seemed to feel that everything was fine and any delays in their development was simply because they were twins.

I began to research autism, and early intervention and therapy. That's when I discovered AEIOU was opening a service on the Gold Coast. We felt incredibly lucky to have been able to join the centre...without AEIOU it would have been difficult for me and Brad to continue working, because of a need to be at home to look after the girls.

Throughout their time at AEIOU, Jaida and Maddie celebrated some wonderful

milestones which many other families may take for granted: Maddie began to say things like 'Mummy', 'Doggie' and 'More' and both girls began to use Makaton to communicate what they wanted or needed. As a result, they began to feel less frustrated, and so did we.

Jaida has some sensory issues – so before we joined AEIOU, she couldn't touch sand. Now she plays in the sandpit. Also, both of the girls were very frightened of having a bath or having their hair washed, but they now enjoy bath time.

Before they were diagnosed with autism, the twins attended another childcare centre, which would have been terrific under other circumstances, but wasn't the right place for Jaida and Maddie because it couldn't cater to their needs. Ultimately the staff there told us the girls were observers... but now, they have the confidence to go and play with children all of the time.

The girls adored going to AEIOU and they loved their teachers – it's as if they became extended family. Not only were the staff fantastic, it's also the friends you make and

support you gain from the other families who are going through many of the same things. It's so important that more families can access this kind of support.

In January this year, the girls transitioned to school. They were both very excited about going to school and even slept in their new school shoes the night before!

The teachers said they were both smiling all day, made some new friends and joined in with all the activities eagerly. This has proved true for their whole first term, where they were keen to get back there every day. They continue to develop skills, including communication and play skills and even though the last few years have been challenging, the support and guidance from AEIOU has helped us make it through, and we're looking forward to whatever the future holds.

As a mother of children with autism, I just wish every family that needs this kind of support could be as fortunate as we were to have a placement at AEIOU.

A community experience: visiting Hollywood on the Gold Coast

Feelings of isolation and a sense of being misunderstood and frustrated may be experienced by all parents from time to time. However, this can escalate for families who have a child with autism, with new studies revealing many parents struggle to cope with financial and social disadvantages.

Therese Hogarth, who has two children with autism, says she is a sociable person, but having children with autism can be isolating.

"The thing is that children with autism don't look any different to anyone else. And as they get older, it becomes harder to manage their meltdowns. When they're small, you can pick them up and remove them from a situation, but as they get older, it's less publically acceptable ... people assume they're having a tantrum, that they're spoiled and misbehaving when in fact, they're experiencing a sensory overload. So, for us, a family outing is rarely spontaneous. It takes up to a month to prepare the children for a change in routine," Therese said.

AEIOU hosts regular community experiences both inside of centres, and in parks, theme parks, movie theatres, and more.

AEIOU told this story to The Courier-Mail in April, with speech pathologist Joanne Stephen assisting the Hogarth Family on a visit to Movie World. William is five, and transitioned from AEIOU in early 2013. Emily is three, and began at AEIOU in January 2013.

The Theme Park kindly donated the entry on the day, and assisted in a visit with Tweetie Bird, and several child-friendly rides and amusements.

Joanne provided support and worked through challenges together with Therese, and assisted by modelling desired behaviour, which not only encourages children to participate, but also provides a simple tactic for parents to follow and adopt. Joanne also assisted Therese to 'prime' the children, encouraging them to watch the rides they wanted to try to make sure they

understood how they worked and to decide if they wanted to participate. Therese and Joanne also used many 'first and then' statements to provide Will and Emily with an indication of what happens when and why, so that there are no surprises.

The children did very well during their community visit, with both Will and Emily bravely trying new experiences and coping well with unpredictable noise, crowds and more. While it's not common practice for AEIOU to host personalised visits like this, it presented a good opportunity to demonstrate what kinds of supports the Foundation can provide to ensure families can feel confident to try new community experiences.

AEIOU hosted a community experience with the Hogarth family in April for a story in The Courier-Mail



AEIOU Alumni

Has your child, grandchild or a child close to you, such as a niece or nephew completed an enrolment at AEIOU Foundation? If so, you are eligible to join our new Alumni program! By joining our Alumni group, you will receive up to date information about developments which affect AEIOU and the families it cares for, the latest details on events, and access to strategies, advice, tips and more. You will also be able to meet likeminded people and share your own experiences or gain new insight from families like your own. For details go to aeiou.org.au/alumni, or email communication@aeiou.org.au.



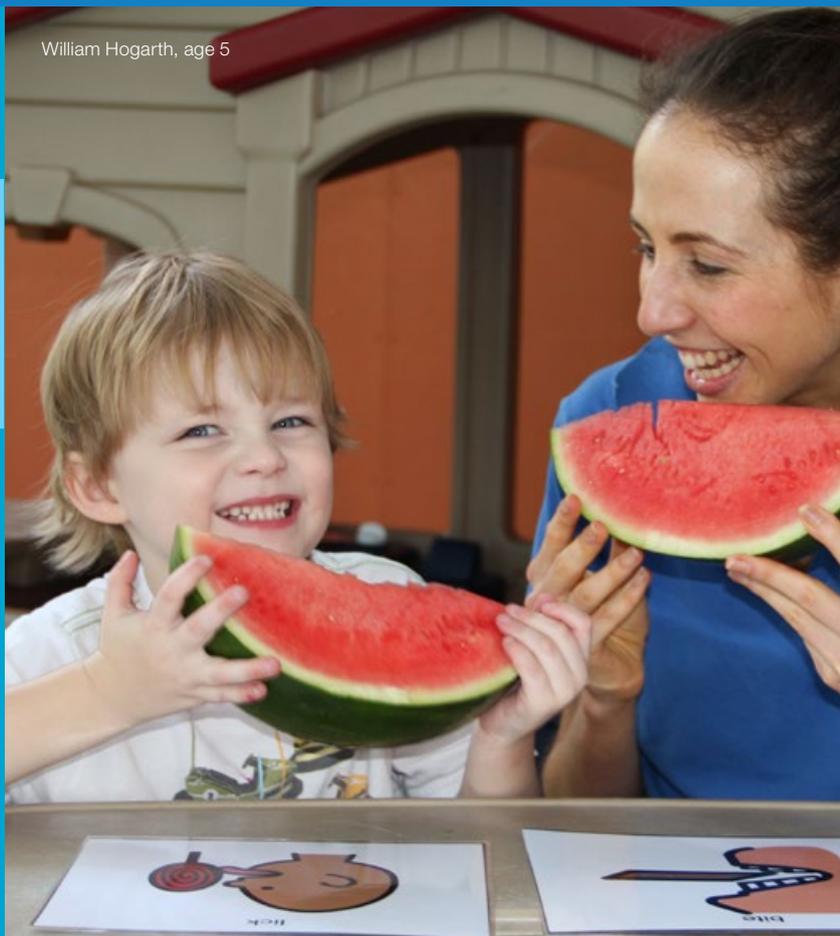
Please give generously to

AEIOU Foundation's 2013 Tax Appeal

Thanks to you, children like Will Hogarth are learning new skills, including the ability to communicate, make friends and gain independence.

Donate to AEIOU's Tax Appeal today. For more information, or to donate online, visit aeiou.org.au.

William Hogarth, age 5



DONATE NOW

to make a difference for children with autism



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