

eyes on
autism

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A WORD FROM OUR CEO

This is my favourite time of the year. As I pause and reflect upon 2017, I'm pleased with what the team at AEIOU has achieved - specifically in the classroom with the children we care so much about, and as an organisation as we navigate major changes with the rollout of the NDIS.

With the internal appointment of an NDIS support coordinator, we have been able to provide tailored advice to each family as they navigate the NDIS, along with regular (free) workshops for the wider community and so much more.

With change comes challenges but also opportunity for growth and that's exactly what we're doing at AEIOU. This month marks the completion of a long-term project, with the opening of a new, purpose-built early intervention centre in Brighton, Adelaide with enrolments open for 2018.

Construction has also started on a new AEIOU Logan Centre for Autism, where up to 50 local families will have unprecedented access to early intervention, resources and support. Located in Meadowbrook on the Griffith University Logan Campus, the centre will also be a hub for research, education, training and resource development.

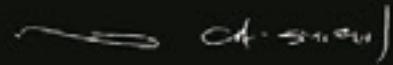
Another significant event for us was the move to our new central office premises in Woolloongabba, bringing central office staff together under one roof for the first time. This move was made possible not only with the support of our landlord, Hu Feeney at FAL Property Group, but also long-term supporters Hutchinson Builders who sponsored the fit out, and the Queensland Government who donated our office furniture. The team is thrilled with their space and the opportunity to truly work together.

As we approach the end of the year, many of our children are preparing to graduate, with 2018 marking new beginnings at various schools. It's a momentous occasion for any family, but especially so for those at AEIOU. As such, we're very pleased to have established a partnership with the Autism Hub, to provide additional transition support to children who graduate from AEIOU's service and move to a new learning environment. In partnership, AEIOU and the Autism Hub can help ensure a smoother transition for these children. We'll start the program with a trial from our Gold Coast centre in 2018 before expanding it across the service.

I'd like to thank our team, those who volunteer to support our program, our donors, partners and our Board of Directors for their commitment and contribution to this organisation. Finally, I thank our families, who put their trust in us and work so hard with our team to create such bright futures.

With Christmas and the holiday season approaching, I encourage you to read Sam Mizzi's story. He's a young boy from Bundaberg who has achieved more than his parents dreamed. You can help make dreams like theirs to come true for other families by donating to our Christmas Appeal, with all details available in this newsletter.

Kind regards



Alan Smith
CEO
AEIOU Foundation



AEIOU BRIGHTON - OPEN IN ADELAIDE

It's a delight to open a new service in the Adelaide suburb of Brighton. As many of you know, this is a long-term project in partnership with respected disability service provider, Minda Incorporated and made possible with a grant from the National Stronger Regions Fund. This purpose-built centre will support up to 40 children, and will provide therapy rooms, a motor skills room, beautiful shady play facilities and a parent training room and retreat.

We'd like to thank our friends at Hutchinson Builders for managing the construction of the centre, and Buchan Architects who designed this beautiful, working space.

AEIOU will celebrate an official opening in February 2018, bringing our team, supporters and community together.



CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

This year marks another time of consistent growth and also reflection on what we do, and how we do it. It's important to stop and ask the big questions from time to time, and make sure we're on track to achieving our goals. The rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) brings with it significant changes, which impact individuals with a disability and also organisations like ours. I'm pleased to say we're on track and we're flexible in our response, with added supports in place to provide additional assistance to families while they navigate the new system.

The quality of the service at AEIOU is high; our curriculum is consistent, our staff are well-trained, they love what they do and importantly, the gains in each child's development is notable. This is largely due to the way we structure the program, with a transdisciplinary model - which simply means we employ people who are capable of not only working within their own profession, but who have the skill to work across other professions.

We rely on the skill of our therapists to guide the service, support the children directly and train our staff. AEIOU employs two Board Certified Behaviour Analysts (BCBA), who provide guidance for the program and support to staff studying towards this qualification. There are just seven BCBA specialists in Queensland, and the qualification is only available through international universities. AEIOU also employs four staff with a Masters in Applied Behaviour Analysis, a degree which is also only available internationally. As such, several key staff hail from destinations including Ireland, the United States of America and New Zealand.

Mid-year, the Federal Government made an announcement regarding 457 Visas, and changes to what kinds of professions employers in Australia can sponsor. We've been working hard to advocate for our specialist staff, and I'm pleased to say AEIOU Foundation has had an opportunity to meet with the Hon. Peter Dutton MP and submit a formal submission regarding the issue.

We're focussed on continued improvement at AEIOU. Next year marks 13 years since we first opened our doors and the progress we've made in that time is overwhelmingly positive. There's always more to be done, and for that reason we'll start the New Year off with added transition support for families on the Gold Coast through our partnership with the Autism Hub, and consideration into how we

can provide additional supports to current and past families. This is a step forward for our community; it follows a time of intensive scrutiny and public conversation about the supports available in schools for children with autism, and it's an area we strongly believe requires greater attention and resources.

I'd like to thank our Board of Directors and all of our supporters, staff and friends for another tremendous year at AEIOU Foundation. I look forward to seeing you all again for another big year in 2018.

Yours sincerely,



James Morton
Chair
AEIOU Foundation.



INTRODUCING LAURA DENHOLM - HEAD OF PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCE

It's a delight to introduce our new Director of People and Performance, Laura Denholm. Laura's career in Human Resources has spanned 15 years across a range of non-profit and commercial organisations, including aged care, event/hospitality, retail and media/TV. Most recently, she worked with PresCare Group, overseeing 1200 staff across three states.

Laura's passion is customer service and collaborating closely with frontline leaders and staff. Since her appointment in September, Laura has enjoyed getting out to many of our centres, and will continue to do so while building a 12 month plan with a commitment to nurturing a positive culture and safe environment for each of our valued staff.





AEIOU AND THE NDIS



Over the past 12 months, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) began rolling out across Queensland, starting in Townsville. Most recently, the Scheme rolled out in Bundaberg, Camira and Toowoomba. The most impactful challenge we've experienced is the time it takes for families to receive access to become a participant of the NDIS. This is particularly challenging for families with little or no support. AEIOU was able to share this experience at a recent NDIS Industry Briefing about the first year of transition. The briefings were initiated by Minister O'Rourke's Queensland NDIS Transition Advisory Group, which AEIOU CEO Alan Smith is a member of.

The process was valuable and it's been acknowledged that while new participants entering the Scheme are experiencing greater delays than expected, existing clients are rolling in on time and all parties can learn and benefit from emerging data and trends.

Having acknowledged the challenges which come when navigating a new and changing system along with a new autism diagnosis, AEIOU has found it increasingly important to support our current families as well as those who are new to the system and seeking early intervention for the first time. To make it easier, we've been hosting a number of free workshops to assist families during the transition. This service has been available across all transition sites, hosted by Katrina Ives, in the NDIS Support Coordinator role, along with our Program Coordinators, who are senior therapists from across a range of disciplines.

We also encourage parents to attend the regular, free training workshops which take place across our centres on a regular basis (also available to new, waitlisted families) and to access our 'Early Years' videos, which are available on our website.

Overall, we have found families in Queensland are receiving the funding they need to access our service. This is particularly true for Toowoomba, which has seamlessly been implemented.

The first plans have now also come through for two families Bundaberg and Camira, and the families are very happy with the plans they have

received. The NDIA promised that families will be better off under the NDIA and we can say confidently that this is the case for these two families.

We look forward to a continued, positive collaboration with the Access Partners, which include Uniting Care Community in Toowoomba and Townsville, BUSHKIDS in Bundaberg, and EACH in Ipswich, where our Camira centre is located.

The next centres earmarked for rollout include those in Nathan (in Brisbane) and the Gold Coast, along with our soon to be opened Logan centre.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is in the process of hosting a number of forums which are designed to provide key information for families, educators and health and community professionals. There is a list of workshops available on our website (aeiou.org.au/NDIS).

Fun in the Sun – Griffith Sport Logan Fun Run

Junior runners, experienced sportspeople, casual strollers and weekend warriors lined up in droves for the Griffith Sport Logan Fun Run in June, to raise money for the children in AEIOU’s program. Around 500 turned up for the run, which included a 1km junior dash, as well as 5km and 10km courses traversing the most scenic areas of the campus, and Riverdale Park.

Funds raised from the event will contribute towards the facilities at the new AEIOU Logan Centre for Autism. CEO Alan Smith says he’s impressed at the growth of the event, which is now in its fifth year. “This is a well-organised, fun event which brings the community together. We recognise the organisers for this, they do a terrific job. We’re looking forward to opening our centre and having a physical presence there next year – hopefully in time for the 2018 event!”



JURASSIC JAM III

The third annual Jurassic Jam event at Brisbane’s coolest music venue, The Triffid was a gig not to be missed. This event is a hot favourite, raising around \$30,000 for the children in our service this year. Our talented and dedicated supporters created a jamming event featuring a lineup from bands including Roger the Cabin Boy, Mardi Wilson, Shag Rock, Rick Hopkins, Jump the Shark, The Manilows, The Vinyl Frontier and The Hanovers.

Guests enjoyed live performances of the songs they know and love from their youth, as well as new tunes, and we’re pretty sure they’ll be lining up for another gig just like it in 2018. We can’t wait. Big thanks to our friends at the Triffid and Hutchinson Builders for hosting this terrific event.

New Look Website

Have you seen our new-look website? Revived and simplified, the site features updated FAQs, new videos, centre profiles and easy access to NDIS and workshop news. The goal is to help parents and other stakeholders to find what they need with ease. In the coming months, we plan to introduce virtual tours of AEIOU centres, an in-house project which will help families to familiarise themselves with the environment at AEIOU. We hope to launch this in the first quarter of 2018.

To coincide with the new AEIOU Foundation website, AEIOU’s mainstream childcare centre in Sippy Downs also received a new website, sippydowns.aeiou.org.au.





YOU ARE NOT ALONE: OUR EXPERIENCE IN EARLY INTERVENTION – *by Jasmin Link*

I'm grateful to share our family story with you. Luke is five and began at Camira in January 2016 and our experience in gaining a diagnosis is quite similar to many families who have a child with autism. It took 10 months of endless appointments with specialists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists and (interestingly) music therapists before he was diagnosed at 2 1/2.

Where we differ slightly is our journey started when I was 20 weeks pregnant with Luke, when the Sonographer detected he had a mild form of Hydrocephalus (extra fluid on the brain) which would have to be monitored throughout his life. This news alone was devastating, however, unlike many autism parents, I was told to expect he could have developmental delays. When Luke was born, he was perfectly healthy and alert. Milestones like walking and babbling were late, but nevertheless he was a healthy child. As time went on, we grew more concerned. As well as being non-verbal, Luke had minimal eye contact, never-ending meltdowns in the form of high-pitched screaming, and destructive behaviour towards toys and sometimes himself. When the word 'autism' was mentioned, it was confronting and forever life-changing, both for the good and the bad. I just didn't want the label, and society in general, to define my child. But, we desperately needed help, so the search for early intervention began.

I had no real knowledge of how to navigate this new world we were thrust into. At that time, ordinary daily activities like putting clothes and shoes on were monumental tasks to complete. Simple gestures like pointing to an object was non-existent, and functional play and social skills were almost like torture to him. I found myself stuck in this idea of 'what's normal and why isn't this working', which is a very hard place to be in especially as a single parent to two young children.

Between receiving his diagnosis and being accepted into the AEIOU program, we were receiving speech therapy and OT at the Indigenous Mums and Bubs Clinic in Logan where we continue to attend for check-up appointments. With the guidance of his GP, who also has a child with autism, we sought access to AEIOU. We also attended the local Early Childhood Development Program (ECDP) in Logan for 2 1/2 hours a week, which was highly beneficial. Around this time, he also began to attend a day care program, to assist with peer and social skills.

Fast-forward to November 2015 when I received *that* call from AEIOU, offering Luke a placement for January 2016. It was the biggest relief! Now, we had a one-stop shop for speech, occupational therapy and behaviour therapy.

Luke is a totally different boy now. We had been through a really tough period where he was head banging/tapping up to 70 times a day, but the staff are fully trained and equipped to keep him safe during these episodes and a Positive Behaviour Support Plan was implemented right away. I also received training and support, with strategies to use at home. It's not easy as a mother to see your child self-harm. It's something that is quite sensitive for me to discuss but I know we aren't alone anymore.

Additionally, Luke has been working daily on using PECS to communicate his wants and needs. I am able to receive home visits to help transition these skills. The parent workshops are highly informative and give parents the added support to implement the strategies used at the centre with our kids. As well as the help from the amazing staff, I've also formed close bonds with other parents, who are my go-to for emotional support and a much-needed laugh, often

about things other parents may not understand. We can't do it alone and thankfully, we never have to either.

Now, Luke can say 'bye', and wave when I leave him in the morning. His tantrums and meltdowns have decreased dramatically in terms of the amount and length. He can take himself to the toilet independently most of the time; he can make a request for something he wants and can gain attention by tapping on a person's shoulder and he can tolerate transitions. We still have ups and downs, but we're making progress.

The most amazing thing is to see his face light up with so much expression, especially when he sees his sister or something he really loves. To see him form a close bond with other children, especially his sister, gives me the most joy. Before this, Luke always sat alone, he didn't want to go to anyone, but now he amazes me every day with his courage and persistence.

I'm so grateful to the staff at AEIOU, the centre is like our second family. I've also just received the best possible news, which is we are the first family under the NDIS as it rolls out in Ipswich to be approved to be fully funded for the next 12 months at AEIOU. Having one more year to continue working on his goals to be fully independent, confident socially and communicating his needs and wants is the best thing that could happen to us. I am truly blessed and appreciative.

What I want all parents to know, especially those with a new diagnosis, is that you are not alone, your child is there and they see you and they hear you. Don't give up hope. We can take many lessons from this experience, including how to see things from a different angle, and to live in the moment.

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TAKE A HIKE BRISBANE!

After a week of rain, the clouds parted and the sun made a grand appearance in time for Take A Hike Brisbane on Sunday 22 October. This year marked the eighth anniversary for the annual event, and more than 600 participants joined forces on the day, making it our biggest yet!

We were delighted to welcome special guests to the Hike, with our Ambassador Ian Skippen and Channel Seven Queensland's Sharyn Ghidella, Sports Reporter Pat Welsh and Racing Royalty, Bart Sinclair.

As a mother and newsreader, Sharyn has heard many stories from families benefitting from AEIOU's evidence-based early intervention program for children with autism aged two to six.

"I know families who have been part of AEIOU's program, and seeing how AEIOU has given children the skills to play with peers, the ability to communicate with their families, and the confidence to head off to their next school, is not only heart-warming; it's inspiring," Sharyn says.

"That's why my family and I are took part in this year's Take A Hike."

'Skip', a long-term friend and Ambassador of AEIOU Foundation tackled the 21km course at this year's event. "In all the years I have been an

ambassador for AEIOU Foundation, I have seen how they are helping children with autism overcome barriers and reach their full potential," Skip says.

"It's amazing to watch these children work so hard to face challenges every day - whether it be socially, with communication, developing independence or learning self-help skills."

Students from the Anglican Church Grammar School proved to be an enormous help on the day - a big thank you to the boys for their help.

This year, for the first time, AEIOU introduced a 5km hike as part of the event, which proved a hot favourite for families.

Together, participants raised over \$75,000 for the children in our South East Queensland centres.

Sharyn Ghidella visits AEIOU Nathan Centre

Ahead of this year's Take A Hike Brisbane event, Channel Seven's Sharyn Ghidella made a special visit to AEIOU's Nathan centre, where she met some of our children and our team before taking a tour of the centre. While there, she took the time to read and play with several children, winning their hearts and minds. This was the first visit Sharyn has made to AEIOU, but she has long been aware of the program and has seen the impact it can have on the lives of young children and their families, with family friends having enrolled their child in the program in recent years. It was a pleasure for all to share the morning with Sharyn, and we extend a big thank you to her for her time.



WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE LOGAN COMMUNITY

With construction of our new Logan centre now underway, we are excited to be building networks with the local community through the innovative Logan Together program.

This collaborative impact group of organisations shares a common drive to create the best life opportunities for every child in Logan. The concept perfectly aligns with our vision and mission, and we are proud to be actively involved.

Recently, AEIOU was fortunate to not only attend, but also host a table talk, at the Logan Get Together event which saw more than 330 stakeholders in the health, social

and education sectors rub shoulders with government policy makers and international funding organisations.

“This event was a real opportunity for us to build connections in the region, and provide information on AEIOU and what we do,” General Manager Greg Johnson says.

“To be in one room with more than 30 organisations, all invested in providing Logan children with the best start in life, was positive and inspiring.

“We know we can make a real difference to children with autism and their families in Logan and our involvement with Logan Together will help make it happen.

“Families of young children with autism in the region have a positive future to look forward to.”

Due for completion in July 2018, in line with the roll out of the NDIS, AEIOU Logan will cater for up to 40 young children with autism and their families. The centre was made possible with funding through a \$1 million National Stronger Regions Fund Grant, and a further commitment of \$1 million by Minister for Health Cameron Dick.

“Griffith University, the Chain Reaction Foundation, and The Wantz Committee have also generously supported the project, for which we are very grateful,” Greg adds.

Keep an eye on progress through our website and social media platforms.



FABULOUS FUNDRAISER

AEIOU Townsville recently received \$2,207.90 following an incredible fundraising effort from The Cathedral School of St Anne and St James Captain, Tilly Davies. Tilly was inspired to raise funds for the centre after her brother's experience attending AEIOU Foundation a number of years ago. She did a phenomenal job getting everyone on board and we'd like to recognise these efforts - what a great achievement. Thanks Tilly!



Laser Beak Man ... colourful superhero comes to life!

AEIOU Ambassador, Tim Sharp achieved a long-term dream recently, when his colourful superhero, Laser Beak Man came to life at La Boite Theatre in September.

This visual feast was part of the Dead Puppet Society and Brisbane Festival Production in Association with Powerarts, and was packed with the trademark visual puns and humour which have made Tim Sharp famous. An absolute delight to watch, made even more special when friends of AEIOU were invited to an evening to also celebrate the birthday of AEIOU sponsor and former Board Director, Stuart Giles.

Congratulations to Tim and Judy Sharp who continue to achieve extraordinary things.

AND THEY'RE OFF! MELBOURNE CUP FRONTRUNNERS ...

As we go to print, there is a hive of activity ahead of the Melbourne Cup Racing Carnival. AEIOU has been named the beneficiary of four events across South East Queensland, with more than 70 volunteers donning their blue shirts to help facilitate on the day and raise funds for the children in our program. With events taking place at The Landing, Victoria Park, Cloudland, and The Island, we send our special thanks to sponsors including Infinity and Anthony's Fine Jewellers.





AEIOU RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE (ARIC)

AEIOU Foundation for children with autism aims to support research that promises to inform future directions of services for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families. Accordingly, AEIOU makes a substantial ongoing investment in a coordinated program of research conducted in its centres and collaborates with researchers outside the organisation to address identified research gaps.

Researchers seeking support from AEIOU to advertise or conduct research are required to complete a research application to be considered by the AEIOU Research and Innovation Committee (ARIC). ARIC will consider applications that address one or more of the current AEIOU Research Priority Areas.

For details and to submit your research application, please visit our website, www.aeiou.org.au/our-research.



Research: New for 2017-2018

AEIOU is involved in many research projects, including: *“Supporting Best Practice in the Assessment and Treatment of Minimally Verbal Children”*. There are opportunities for families to participate in studies like this one, which will commence in early 2018.

What are the aims of the study?

Our aim is to work with children’s families, and staff at specific AEIOU centres to better understand speech and language development in children on the autism spectrum. We want to learn more about how children learn to communicate, why some children have more difficulty than others, and how best to support each child develop his or her communication skills. We are going to:

1. Document the development of spoken language in children when they enter our centres and over a nine month period;
2. Identify factors that predict children’s spoken language outcomes following nine months of intervention; and
3. Work with speech pathologists and a broad research team to develop clinical recommendations for assessment of intervention and reporting of language processes.

Who is conducting this study?

This is a collaborative study involving children attending Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centres (ASELCC) in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania and the AEIOU Gold Coast centre. AEIOU Foundation’s Nathan centre falls under this banner. The study is being led by Dr Madonna Tucker (AEIOU Foundation), and Dr David Trembath (Griffith University) with research collaborators at each early learning centre and across Griffith University, La Trobe University, and the University of New South Wales.

Start date for 2018... Ready Set Go

Work with the speech pathologists and the broader research team in developing recommendations for working with children with minimal language is being undertaken now. Recruitment for children to participate in the study will commence in early 2018. AEIOU will be in touch with all families who are enrolled under ASELCC.

SHARING AND GAINING KNOWLEDGE

AEIOU is extremely proud of our high quality early intervention program, and we value being recognised as leaders in our field.

This year has been particularly busy attending conferences and expos which focus on early education and intervention.

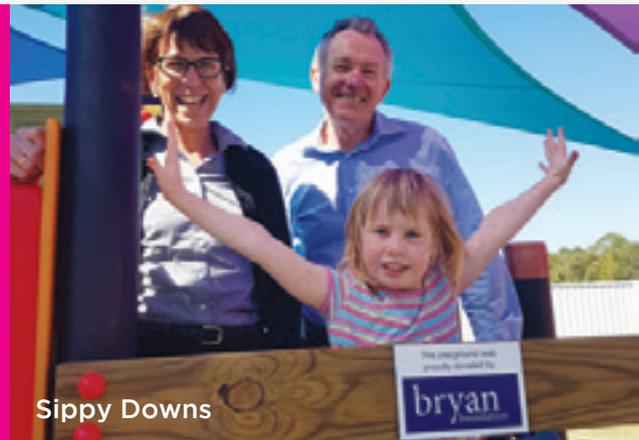
In line with ensuring we are up-to-date with the latest evidence-based research, members of our senior program team participated in the Asia Pacific Autism Conference in Sydney in September. Attracting families, practitioners, researchers, advocates

and policy makers from across the world, the conference showcased the latest global research and provided a valuable professional development opportunity. Equally beneficial to be a part of is the Association for Behaviour Analysis Australia (ABAA) National conference which is being held as the edition of Eyes on Autism goes to print.

To further spread the word on AEIOU's evidence-based program, we have been very busy getting out and about at community expos and workshops. Staff at our centres understand the value of speaking with local families and professionals who want to know more about our program, and how we are creating brighter futures.

In recent months, AEIOU has sponsored and attended the Gold Coast Raising Happy Kids Expo and Gold Coast My Kids expo, Adelaide Kyd-X for young people with disabilities and the Adelaide Parent and Baby Expo, Moreton Bay Community Expo, and in Toowoomba we exhibited at the Baby and Toddler Expo. In Bundaberg our staff spoke with people interested in careers in disability at the local Options Day and in Camira we were part of the Ipswich Marketplace event to discuss NDIS.

PLAYGROUND FUN FOR CHILDREN IN SIPPY DOWNS AND TOWNSVILLE!



Our Sippy Downs and Townsville Centres have both received upgrades to their playgrounds recently.

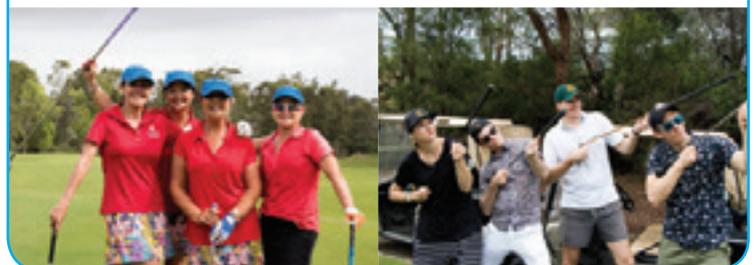
In Sippy Downs, the children received an entirely new playground, generating big smiles all round! Made possible by a generous \$50,000 grant from long-time AEIOU supporters the Bryan Foundation, the playground is a vital part of AEIOU's evidence-based early intervention program, and also benefits typically developing children who attend the centre's day care and kindergarten program.

An enormous thank you to the Bryan Foundation, which focuses on funding health and education for the disadvantaged, has supported AEIOU since 2010.

In Townsville, the children are loving their refurbished sandpit and new bike track, with a second phase of development scheduled to take place before the end of the year. The playground was in great need of this upgrade, which was funded by the Department of Communities. The children are thrilled, as are the team - a big thanks to the Department for their support.

Coronis Golfing Greatness

The Coronis Real Estate Team on the Sunshine Coast hosted a terrific Golf Day at North Lakes in October. More than 100 golfers turned up to raise \$20,000 for an amazing water sensory garden at AEIOU Sippy Downs. The irony wasn't lost on us... the day took place during a peak period of torrential rain in the region, but the water didn't dampen spirits. Everybody had a great time at this inaugural event, which we hope will be the first of many. A big thank you to Coronis Real Estate and all event supporters.



“HOW EARLY INTERVENTION GIFTED US OUR FIRST FAMILY HOLIDAY” - THE MIZZI FAMILY



Our journey with AEIOU has taken us from helplessly watching our son have multiple meltdowns daily to a successful first camping trip as a family. We love the outdoors but even one night away with Sam and our daughter was something we'd never thought would be possible before AEIOU. It's amazing to think how far our family has come through early intervention.

Sam was always an unsettled baby, but from around the 12-month mark, he screamed most of the time and was very hard to settle. He never slept well and watching the TV was the only thing he would engage in. My younger brother has mild Asperger's so I was a little more open to the idea Sam had autism, but it was more difficult for my husband Steve to come to terms with.

When we received a diagnosis, I felt relief as I knew it meant we could start getting more help.

We looked into so many different options here in Bundaberg, but found AEIOU was suited to our needs, as their complete focus was on children with autism. At that point, Sam was so out of control he was making himself sick with all the screaming. We were spending a fortune on occupational and speech therapy, making it a major relief when he started AEIOU in 2016 aged two and a half.

When we first started, Sam hated us leaving of a morning so much he screamed the place down for about a month before he settled. It was very difficult but looking back, the progress we have made is just amazing.

Sam's communication has always been our biggest challenge and AEIOU has turned it into his greatest improvement. He can communicate most of his needs verbally now, such as 'wee wee' for toilet, 'iusse' for tissue and 'drink'. The staff have shown Sam he can communicate with us without needing to scream. He is a very smart boy and once he figures out he can communicate with us better verbally, I think we will be in lots of trouble!

The Bundaberg team have taught us so many valuable skills about how to deal with Sam to make life easier for everyone. That we can go out in public, to a friend's house or the beach without worrying about what could happen. Sam is also now toilet trained, a skill he picked up fairly quickly, thanks to AEIOU's persistence and effective methods.

AEIOU has given us hope for Sam's future. He has changed so much since starting last year and we're always receiving comments on it. It's the best decision we ever made.

To future AEIOU parents, I would say, as hard as it is in the beginning and those bad days that never seem to end, never stop believing or thinking your child is special. He or she will go beyond your expectations to achieve the impossible. It is also crucial to always listen to the advice your teachers and therapists give you and trust your instincts. Together you will achieve more than you can imagine.

By Amber Mizzi



NEW AEIOU FAMILY VIDEOS

It was a delight to meet with some of our Brisbane families recently to create two videos, demonstrating the difference our program makes to the lives of the children we care for. The unscripted videos also aimed to provide insight and a sense of support to parents and carers who either suspect, or have received, a new autism diagnosis for their own child. The result was a heartfelt, genuine account of the challenges our families encounter and the barriers they, and their children, break through every day. We extend an enormous thank-you to each of the parents who gave their time and shared their stories. If you haven't seen the videos yet, take a look at our website – you'll be glad you did.

INTRODUCING LOUISE DAVIES, EXECUTIVE MANAGER SOUTH AUSTRALIA

We're pleased to welcome a new Executive Manager in South Australia. Louise Davies, who comes to us from Autism SA, commenced in our Adelaide centre in November.

Her focus is to assist with the growth and development of AEIOU's service in Adelaide, specifically in Brighton. In this role, Louise is responsible for high level stakeholder management, and liaising with local partners.

Louise has depth of experience in the Autism sector in South Australia, previously the Deputy CEO of Autism SA, a position she held for eight (8) years after emigrating to Australia from the UK, 10 years ago. As the Deputy CEO, Louise was responsible for Autism SA's operational performance, the development of services and programs, the development of new services and strategic planning for the organisation.

We are absolutely delighted to have Louise as part of our team. Please join us in warmly welcoming her to the centre.



CENTRAL OFFICE RELOCATION

AEIOU's central office team has completely settled into its new office space in Woolloongabba. The move marks the first time all central office staff have had an opportunity to work together in one location. Our visitors are greeted by images of happy AEIOU children's faces at the door, followed by a warm welcome from our star receptionist, Cathy Pitkin.

The Research & Assessment team are based on the ground floor, with easily accessible assessment rooms for visiting children and families. All other staff are based on the first level of the building. Increases in communication and process efficiency have been noted, and we're excited about how this will help us to move forward.

The milestone move was made possible with thanks to the support from a number of friends and supporters of AEIOU Foundation. The space was designed by Buchan Architects and all furniture and equipment was donated from the Queensland Government Treasury Department (represented by Kate, pictured), and the financial and in-kind contribution from Hutchinson Builders (represented by Site Manager, Ian, in middle). AEIOU CEO, Alan Smith, was delighted to present Ian and Kate with artwork from our children as a gesture of our appreciation.

All phone contact numbers remain the same for Central Office, and the new address is 3 Balaclava Street, Woolloongabba.



DO A TREK

In the wee hours on a cool Spring morning, 38 intrepid explorers trekked from Mt Glorious through to the Enoggera Reservoir at The Gap. This was no mean feat – it was a gruelling 42km trek through rainforest and rugged bush landscapes. This physical and personal challenge was tackled in the name of raising funds and awareness for children at AEIOU.

The event was driven by a group of engineering industry mates who have personally experienced the life-changing benefits of AEIOU Foundation’s early intervention program for children with autism. With teams from leading consultancy firms Lambert & Rehbein and SMEC joined by leading construction contractors including BMD and Qld Bridge & Civil, the trek attracted great interest.

With the support of Engineers Australia and Consult Australia, those behind Do-A-Trek hope this will become an annual event, which will attract even more members of the engineering community.

Current Chair of Consult Australia Qld Division and Director of Lambert & Rehbein, Steve Williams says: “Having a son with autism, we were fortunate to access the AEIOU Foundation early

intervention program and have seen first-hand the life changing results it achieves. AEIOU truly changed the life of our son Jacob and had a profound impact on our family, including my wife and 2 other young boys. We are proud to be part of the inaugural Do-A-Trek for Autism and hope this event becomes something truly special.”

Queensland Division Manager of Engineers Australia Stacey Rawlings adds: “Engineers Australia Qld Division was pleased to support the inaugural Do A Trek for Autism. Engineering and other STEM related industries have a lot to offer people affected by autism and have the ability to create significant opportunities, helping these kids reach their full potential.”

“We are excited to see Engineers Australia members get involved in this event and play a vital role in raising Autism awareness and much needed funds aimed at vital early intervention programs.”

AEIOU is grateful and proud to welcome the ongoing support and friendship which provided the foundation of this event. We thank Consult Australia and Engineers Australia and hats off to Team Jacob, Oliver’s Army, Lambert and Rehbein, WBC and SMEC.

The event was managed by Executive Excellence, who also excel in managing AEIOU’s annual Take a Hike events.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: FATIMAH ALMATHAMI

There are so many ways you can get involved and support the work we do at AEIOU Foundation. We rely on members of our local community to give their time and volunteer at our events, and our centres. Meet Fatimah Almathami, who has volunteered at five fabulous events this year, helping with registrations and fundraising.

Tell us a little about yourself:

I am a Saudi lady, who relocated to live and study in Australia late 2008. I love to study and spend time helping others whenever they need it. I especially love little kids and spending time with them, and that’s one of the reasons I volunteer for AEIOU.

How did you hear about AEIOU?

I first heard about AEIOU on the Volunteering Queensland website. Then I browsed it more and loved the great work that AEIOU is doing for children with autism. I really appreciate everything AEIOU does.

What’s the best thing about volunteering within your community?

I really enjoy helping others and feel the gratefulness.

You’ve helped at a number of AEIOU’s events - can you share a highlight or something you love best about giving your time to AEIOU?

The feeling of appreciation especially on the Gala night. The stories of children with autism shared that night made me feel so grateful to be there and do such a little thing for those kids. I wish I can give them more but the best thing I can do is giving them as much time as I can.

What do you do when you’re not volunteering for AEIOU?

I volunteer for others, go for a walk, spend time with my siblings, hang out with friends and go to movies.





Get your friends, colleagues or school friends together on Friday 1 June 2018 to raise funds and awareness for children with autism. You can celebrate by hosting a morning tea with gold coin donations, a free-dress day at your workplace or school, or an event of your choice.

Visit aeiou.org.au/events for details. Register now to receive your kit, with great tips to help you create a lifetime of opportunities for children with autism.



Chain Reaction ... coming soon to New Zealand!

AEIOU Foundation is delighted to be chosen as a major beneficiary of the 2018 Chain Reaction Queensland Ride. Starting and finishing in Christchurch, this event is the Ultimate Corporate Bike Challenge, raising funds for children in need by challenging senior executives who have a passion for cycling and an awareness of their corporate social responsibilities. Taking place over seven days, cyclists complete a 1,000km course. This is a tremendous event, and all funds raised through Chain Reaction help AEIOU Foundation to extend our service and reach more children with an autism diagnosis.

To find out more, visit chain-reaction.org.au.



Your gift this Christmas is one that will last a lifetime

Creating a lifetime of opportunities for children with autism

aeiou
FOUNDATION
for children with autism

To make a donation, visit aeiou.org.au/support-aeiou



OUR SUPPORTERS



Enrolments now open for 2018!

AEIOU Foundation is now accepting enrolments across all centres for 2018.

With new centres opening in Brighton (Adelaide) and Logan, there will be 10 services across Queensland and in South Australia.

For information about AEIOU's program and how our service can help you, visit aeiou.org.au or phone our friendly team on 1300 273 435.

