

eyes on  
**autism**



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# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

**This year marks 13 years of service for AEIOU Foundation, which as you know, was founded by Dr James Morton AM and Louise Morton. As Chair of AEIOU Foundation, James has been a passionate advocate for children with autism, driving change and establishing a service which has impacted the lives of a generation of Queensland children and their families.**

Now, James has decided to take a step back, resigning from his position as Chair of AEIOU Foundation. He will remain an active Director but hands the reigns to Susan Rix AM, who joined the Board of Directors in October 2016.

Susan will steer AEIOU Foundation through this next phase of growth and change, bringing a wealth of business and governance expertise. As a chartered accountant and partner at BDO (Qld) Pty Ltd, Susan has more than 20 years' experience serving on numerous boards across various sectors, specialising in governance and risk.

We extend heartfelt thanks to James for his tireless commitment to AEIOU, and we warmly welcome Susan to this new position.

There's no denying the rollout of the NDIS brings a time of unprecedented change to organisations such as AEIOU Foundation. We've been working hard to support families during the transition to this scheme, and prepare for the rollout which will impact our Nathan and Gold Coast centres from 1 July. In addition, construction is on track for our new Logan centre, which will also open under the NDIS in July this year.

The Logan centre is an exciting development, truly bringing industry and community together. Our team has actively participated in numerous initiatives with Logan Together, and is engaging in a range of community events to connect with locals and assist families with information about how they can access the NDIS, and what kinds of supports are available to them.

In addition, the team has been busy hosting numerous workshops, particularly regarding the NDIS across the southern Brisbane and Gold Coast regions. I urge all parents to try to attend one of these workshops, or to contact our team if you have any questions. We're here to help!

Finally, be sure to read our article about this year's incredible Chain Reaction Bike Challenge. AEIOU Directors and brothers James and Euan Morton tackled the 1,000km,

seven day challenge this year, with the peloton raising an unprecedented \$1.5 million. AEIOU and Ronald McDonald House were named as the two major beneficiaries of this event, and we extend our thanks and congratulations to the cyclists.

Yours sincerely,



**Alan Smith**  
CEO



## INTRODUCING PAT WELSH, AEIOU FOUNDATION AMBASSADOR

**AEIOU Foundation is delighted to welcome veteran Seven News sports commentator Pat Welsh as an ambassador for the organisation. Pat, who joined AEIOU Foundation in 2018 says he has friends whose lives have been touched by autism and he was impressed by the impact the program at AEIOU has on the lives of young children and their families.**

Last year, Pat stepped out for Take a Hike Brisbane, walking a 5km stretch of the Brisbane River with his colleague, Seven News presenter Sharyn Ghidella, who also gave her time in support of the children at AEIOU.

More recently, Pat spent the morning with friends of AEIOU, staff and members of the community at the inaugural Let's Get Awesome for Autism family fun day, and had a terrific time speaking to families who attended the event.

# MESSAGE FROM THE GM .....

**A big start to the year here at AEIOU! As usual, there's a lot happening across the organisation. We're delighted to congratulate four long-serving staff members for reaching 10 years of service with AEIOU, Sandy Peachey from Toowoomba, Brigitte Pernusch from Bray Park, Louise Hargrave-Smith from Central Office and Carolyn Davis from Camira.**

I've also been thrilled to see our Bundaberg centre flourish in recent months, and our Logan centre is well on the way, with construction expected to be completed by July. Recruitment is now commencing for the centre, so if you, or someone you know is interested in joining our team, please reach out.

I was thrilled to join our community in Toowoomba for the eighth annual Take A Hike Toowoomba event, alongside Mayor Paul Antonio and over 200 locals, including families, friends, sponsors and supporters of

our centre. You can read all about it further on. A very big thank you to everyone who came on the day and raised awareness and funds for the children we care for.

In other news, we're improving our personal and professional development program for our centre-based staff and investigating how we can reduce the burden of administrative tasks, particularly with the added reporting required under the NDIS.

In addition to this, we're investigating how we can offer greater value to our families, particularly with flexibility to our service and accessing care and therapy under the NDIS. It's important that we're able to adjust to change and provide a service which reflects the needs of the families we're committed to supporting.

In that vein, we've also been looking at the kinds of therapy support we can offer to transitioning families, or those on our waitlists. Many thanks to the parents who have given their time, either by attending a focus group in person or for completing our surveys. It's great to hear what we can do to

continue supporting each child as they grow and develop, and what supports can assist the whole family unit.

Yours sincerely,

**Greg Johnson**  
General Manager



# INTRODUCING SUSAN RIX AM, CHAIR OF AEIOU FOUNDATION .....

**As many of you know, AEIOU Foundation warmly welcomes Susan Rix AM as the new Chair of the organisation. Dr James Morton AM has made an extraordinary contribution to AEIOU Foundation as its Chair since 2005, but more so, to the autism community in Queensland and interstate.**

James, who will remain a Director at AEIOU, welcomes Susan to the helm.

Susan Rix joined AEIOU Foundation's Board of Directors in 2016 and in that time has made a significant impact, particularly due to her experience in the not-for-profit and corporate sectors. Ms Rix, who boasts an

impressive CV which spans over 30 years of practice specialising in business advisory services, said it is an honour to be appointed as the new Chairperson at AEIOU Foundation.

"The disability sector is undergoing major reform with the rollout of the NDIS and this presents significant challenges but also great opportunities. It will be a huge task to follow the extraordinary leadership we have enjoyed with Dr Morton, and I thank him for both his stewardship of AEIOU Foundation to date and his ongoing support."

"I am passionate about creating strong, inclusive opportunities for children with autism and their families, and am excited to accept this position," Ms Rix said.





# ARE YOU READY FOR THE NEW CHILD CARE SUBSIDY?

**AEIOU Foundation centres are registered as long day care providers, ensuring families can access quality care for their children both before and after program times.**

As many parents know, from 1 July, there will be significant changes to the child care benefit scheme, with the introduction of the Child Care Subsidy.

The big changes include:

- This is a single, means-tested subsidy, which replaces the current Child Care Benefit (CCB) and Child Care Rebate (CCR).
- It will be paid directly to service providers (to be passed onto families).
- There will be a three-step activity test which aligns the hours of subsidised care with the combined hours of work, training study, or other recognised activity undertaken.

If you are not already receiving it, apply to receive a carer allowance. This will assist families caring for children with severe disability. This will give you a maximum of 72 hours per fortnight of care under this new scheme. If you have a child who requires 100 hours of care over fortnight, you will need to have the carer payment, or be studying, volunteering or working to make up your hours.

Please contact AEIOU Foundation's parent liaison and fees team on 07 3320 7500 or via [accounts@aeiou.org.au](mailto:accounts@aeiou.org.au).

# LOGAN CENTRE... OPENING SOON!

Construction on the new, purpose-built AEIOU Foundation centre in Logan is nearing completion. We expect to open the centre mid-year, with nearly 30 families registered on the waitlist already. Located on the Griffith University Campus in Meadowbrook, Logan, the centre will have capacity to support up to 50 families. It will become home to the Griffith University Autism Centre of Excellence, and will provide opportunities to connect students studying allied health and education degrees with the program for vocational experience, with opportunities for research and development also available. The centre will also provide a pathway for knowledge and tools to be distributed to educators in local mainstream settings, which will assist children and families to transition to their next educational setting and access the local community.

The centre has been made possible with the support of a number of stakeholders. Capital for the construction is with thanks to the Queensland Government's Department of Health and the Federal Government's National Stronger Regions Fund. In addition, the land has been gifted to AEIOU by Griffith University, with the fitout and playground made possible with thanks to the Chain Reaction Bike Challenge and the Wantz Committee.

Buchan Architects are long-term supporters of AEIOU Foundation, and are responsible for the design of this centre. Hutchinson Builders, also long-term supporters, are constructing the building.

This is an exciting project for AEIOU Foundation, and we're very much looking forward to becoming a part of the community in Logan. Already we have enjoyed participating in a number of activities and workshops across the region, providing hands on advice and support to families seeking access to the NDIS and quality early intervention through programs like AEIOU's.



# COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITIES



**Opening new services for children with autism doesn't just create life-changing differences for individuals, it has a great effect on the wider community. Early intervention, along with awareness, has social and economic impacts which benefit children, families, schools and services in the short and long term.**

In the lead up to opening a new service for families in Logan, AEIOU is reaching out through events and networking groups to increase awareness and generate interest in our program.

We are seeing great purpose and inspiration as part of Logan Together, a long-term community campaign developed to create the best life opportunities for children in the region. Logan Together knows that children who do well in their early years have the best chance of doing well in life. "So the difference we make now has a big payoff in the future," they say.

Logan Together aligns ideally with AEIOU's mission and vision. By sharing information and data on local children

and families, we are better able to reach children with autism who will most benefit from life-changing early intervention. We are enjoying the opportunity to work with partners like these to help a generation of kids to reach their potential.

An important focus for Logan Together partners is making sure residents understand the supports they can receive through the NDIS. We are also engaging with the Logan Together NDIS stakeholders group to make sure all people who are eligible for supports are guided through the process; and we are directly supporting families and professionals with group and individual information sessions.

At AEIOU, we really enjoy meeting people who have a connection with autism, either through children, siblings, extended family, friends, or colleagues. We have had a great time cooking sausages at Bunnings Loganholme, hosting activities for children at the Family Place and attending reading sessions at the library. We look forward to engaging further, and being part of a community working to give children the best chance to succeed in life.



## AEIOU LIGHTS UP BRISBANE

**As the sun went down on AEIOU's inaugural Let's Get Awesome for Autism fun day in Brisbane, the city came alive in our trademark colours in a spectacular finale.**

Brisbane's most iconic monuments, including the Story Bridge, City Hall and the Kurilpa Bridge, sparkled pink and blue against a clear Autumn sky.

The light show is a visual opportunity to embrace autism and celebrate the families we are privileged to stand alongside each day, working towards a common goal.

What a fitting close to Autism Awareness Month for 2018!



# ACCESSING THE NDIS ... A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES



Widely recognised as the largest social reform Australia has seen since the establishment of Medicare, the rollout of the NDIS is underway across most regions. Our Brisbane, Gold Coast and Logan centres are the next to switch to the Scheme, from 1 July 2018. There's a number of resources available to families who are seeking help when gaining access to the NDIS, including free parent and carer workshops and an AEIOU pre-planning guide.

Below are some tips which will assist you if you're yet to commence the process.

## Where does AEIOU fit within the NDIS funded supports?

AEIOU Foundation is an NDIS Registered Provider, within the category of Capacity Building and Specialised Group Early Childhood Intervention.

## How can I gain access to the NDIS?

In order to apply you need to ensure that your child meets a number of requirements

- First check that you live in a roll out site.
- There are age, residency and early intervention/disability requirements your child will also need to meet to become a participant.

## I'm in a rollout site and my child meets the criteria, so what do I do next?

To access the NDIS, you will need to call 1800 800 100 and request an Access Request Form. This form will be sent to you, and when completing, it's important to attach a copy of your child's diagnostic reports.

- Section A is your child's details
- Section B is your consent to share details with the NDIA
- Section C is how would you like the NDIA to contact you
- Section D is your details
- Section E you will not need to complete
- Section F gives two options: if you can provide copies of diagnostic reports and assessments then you will select the first option. You will NOT need to ask a professional to complete the table of information.
- Section G is a disclaimer
- Section H is your signature and a few more small details

After you return the form, the National Access Team should take 21 days to determine if you meet the requirements and you will get a letter of confirmation in the mail.

## What happens next?

If your child is not eligible then you will be referred to an Early Childhood Partner and they will provide links to services and broader community support.

If your child is eligible then you will be referred to an Early Childhood Partner and they will schedule a planning meeting with you.

## How can I prepare for my planning meeting?

It's a good idea to think more broadly about describing your day-to-day life, within the framework of the list below. It's a good idea to keep some notes to take with you.

- Communication
- Self-care skills\*
- Learning and using new skills
- Social and emotional skills
- Think more broadly about the functional impacts of your child's disability and what an ordinary life looks like for a typically developing child at this age

\*Self-care skills may not be discussed for children under two years, but you may want to raise it if you're experiencing challenges with your child's behaviour in relation to any of these areas.

## Meeting your Early Childhood Partner

This organisation helps you navigate the system and plan the best approach for your child, and determines how your child's needs will be best met, i.e. through free short-term services offered by the Early Childhood Partner or more intensive early intervention supports, like attending AEIOU.

If your child needs NDIS supports, the Partner will allocate a Planner when you first meet. At first, you'll simply be getting to know each other and sharing what life is like now, and what your goals and hopes are for the future. It's best to meet your Planner, who may also be called a 'co-ordinator', face to face, whether they come to your home, or you meet them in their office location.

### My child already attends AEIOU Foundation. What do I need to do?

If you're already enrolled at AEIOU, simply register for Access to the Scheme so your child can become a participant. Once you have attended your planning meeting, the team at AEIOU will provide a supporting evidence report with details about your child's functional capacity, including the progress your child has already made at AEIOU and areas your child still needs to develop. This will assist your planner in the development of your child's plan.

### What if my child doesn't attend AEIOU yet?

Give our friendly team a call, or send us an email. We will organise a time to meet with you and your child to work out if our program is suitable for your child's needs. If it is and you would like to enrol, we will support this and assist you in the process with the NDIS Early Childhood Partner.

### What happens after the planning meeting?

In this instance, you will receive a plan of supports which will best suit your child's needs. You should receive your plan within seven days of it being approved. You can select to share your plan with us by selecting this option on the MyGov portal. If you're unhappy with your plan, contact us and your planner as soon as possible. You have three months to have a plan reviewed, we can assist you with this.

### How can I manage my NDIS funded supports?

If the Early Childhood Planner/Coordinator determines that your child requires a NDIS plan, they will ask how you would like to manage the funded supports.

There are four ways to manage your funded supports, you may choose to be:

1. Agency Managed
2. Self-Managed
3. Provider Managed
4. A combination of all of the above.

AEIOU actively supports families who are entering the NDIS. Our team is experienced and well equipped to help you. AEIOU is part of a number of committees, and works with Partners and the NDIA to assist in the continuous improvement of the Scheme.

Contact our NDIS Support Co-ordinator today. Simply email [NDIS@aeiou.org.au](mailto:NDIS@aeiou.org.au) or phone 1300 273 435 and ask to speak to Katrina.

A tip to keep up to date with what is happening in the NDIS space is to go to their Q&A area and follow the latest news, via [www.ndis.gov.au/latest\\_news](http://www.ndis.gov.au/latest_news).





# TURNING TURTLE – THE FIRST SEVEN YEARS WITH TRIPLETS AND AUTISM

**When Paulette Moser and her husband Nigel first found out they were having triplets, they knew their world was about to undergo massive change.**

**“The road that lay ahead was uncharted territory for Nigel and I,” Paulette writes in her newly released book *Turning Turtle – the first seven years with triplets and autism*.**

**“What we also could not know as we welcomed our trio into the world, was that we would embark on another journey, that of Autism Spectrum Disorder. Two of our triplets are on the spectrum.”**

For Paulette, documenting her family’s experience raising triplets, two on the autism spectrum, has been more than an opportunity to record their journey. It is a way to share their insights and experiences, to educate and fortify parents who may face similar experiences.

In her book, the former AEIOU Bray Park parent dedicates a chapter to Charlette’s time spent undertaking early intervention at AEIOU, where they quickly saw positive changes for not only Charlette, but their family.

Paulette has been a wonderful advocate of the AEIOU program and we were proud to launch this new release at our inaugural Let’s Get Awesome for Autism fun day in Brisbane during Autism Awareness Month with Federal Assistant Minister for Disability Services Jane Prentice. As well as signing copies for guests on the day, we have purchased copies to gift to new families when they enrol at AEIOU, so that they don’t feel alone when facing the challenges ahead.

Paulette chatted to AEIOU in a Q&A format prior to the launch.

**There is no denying you have a great story to tell; what was the inspiration for you to take the time to write?**

To begin with I wanted to make a record of our journey for ourselves, but then realised that our insights and experiences might be useful for others too.

It helped us to put it all down and see just what we had dealt with, and are still dealing with.

**Can you describe your three children- strengths and challenges?**

They are all different to each other.

Josiah, who was diagnosed at five with Asperger’s Syndrome, is excelling at school, especially in mathematics. He is a quiet child, but has made a good friend at school. He enjoys sport, but dislikes being the centre of attention in any way and doesn’t cope well with change (e.g. when a relief teacher takes his class). He does not handle boredom well and always needs to know what our plans are for the day.

Charlette struggles academically at school, and experiences being left out of things a lot. She doesn’t get invited to birthday parties and would love a friend at school, but so far it hasn’t happened. She is aware she has autism now and tries to understand how it affects her. Charlette gives great compliments to people around her, like “you look beautiful today” or “that’s a nice shirt” etc., and she particularly loves animals.

Aisha thrives at school and makes friends easily and really enjoys singing in the school choir. She can be anxious and loud at times. As she grows, she is developing an awareness of Charlette’s needs and tries to support her.

*“We were a couple from Kallangur (north of Brisbane) and we enlarged to become a family of five with the arrival of our first offspring – triplets.*

*“While the earliest months of the babies lives passed in a blur of fatigue and exhaustion for us, we considered that this was a temporary and necessary stage. We hoped that as the babies grew, our continual tiredness would abate as the babies learned to sleep longer, and adjust to routines.*

*“The fatigue eventually lessened but it was replaced by concern, especially for Charlette, the second born. Before she was two and a half, Charlette was diagnosed with moderately severe autism. Josiah, the first born, was diagnosed at age five with Asperger’s Syndrome.” Paulette Moser with June Hopkins; *Turning Turtle* 2017.*

**How has autism impacted them all as siblings?**

The two on the spectrum are very fond of video games, whereas Aisha likes spending time with people and doing things. They play together and they also fight as siblings usually do. As they grow, they are understanding how Autism affects people and are learning to make allowances for this, however it is a constant complex thing for a child to understand.

**Your book is about the early years: what do you hope for the most in the next 10 years for your family?**

I am *not* looking forward to them reaching puberty, but guess we will cope through it all somehow. We hope they reach their potential at school and go on to be able to enjoy their lives, doing whatever jobs they can cope with.

**As a parent, what is the one piece of advice you would give someone whose child has just been diagnosed with autism?**

Your child is a unique individual and autism is just one aspect of them. Love and enjoy them. Also as the parent look after yourself, too. You are as important as your child. Be there for each other.



**New parents enrolling at AEIOU Foundation will receive a copy of *Turning Turtle: The first seven years with triplets and autism* by Paulette Moser with June Hopkins. Copies are also available for sale by emailing Paulette directly at [etteluap@bigpond.com](mailto:etteluap@bigpond.com).**



## TAKE A HIKE TAKES OFF IN 2018

**With Take A Hike Toowoomba under our belts, and Townsville and Brisbane on the radar, we are expecting a bigger than ever crowd at our signature fundraising events this year.**

More than 200 parents, children, friends, neighbours, employees and supporters took on the Toowoomba Take A Hike event on 22 April, raising funds for the local AEIOU centre, and just as importantly, awareness.

Blue skies and cool weather made for a perfect day to host the event in picturesque Queens Park. It's the second year we have included the 5km event with the 10.5km and 21km routes, and its popularity is evident. People joining in with prams, puppies, and even scooters, shows real community spirit, for which Toowoomba is known. Thanks must go to the event's first sponsor, PlastaMasta, who not only support Take A Hike, but regularly provide assistance and funds for our local centre. We also extend our thanks to Toowoomba Regional Council

Mayor Paul Antonio and his colleagues who supported the event and also laced up to hike!

This year's Townsville Take A Hike will take place on 17 June, and we're looking forward to seeing a terrific turnout. Registrations are building and we are keen to grow numbers of participants year-on-year.

And in Brisbane, Take a Hike will be held on 14 October in South Brisbane.

Find out how you can get involved by checking the AEIOU website at [aeiou.org.au](http://aeiou.org.au).



## Thank you Vuly much!

We're bouncing off the walls with excitement over our new trampoline, thanks to the kind people at Vuly Play. The Brisbane-based company has again donated one of their top-of-the-line models - the Thunder Pro - to AEIOU Nathan, for our children to enjoy for years to come. It's all part of a fantastic philanthropic mission to support schools, hospitals and therapy programs that help kids, particularly those with autism. The Thunder Pro is particularly well-suited for these children, because it uses no coil springs and has an enclosure that fully protects the bouncer.

Vuly Community Engagement and Brand Manager, Davinder Saini, says that the company values "being active in the local community". Mr Saini points out that Vuly knows well the positive effects a trampoline could have on a child. "Bouncing on a trampoline is a fun way to expend lots of energy very quickly, while benefiting their balance and muscles, while also alleviating stress,". He continues, "The team at AEIOU has also told us that having the children request to use the trampoline is a great way of improving their verbal skills and also for interacting with others, socially." Vuly has also assisted AEIOU Nathan staff in selecting an appropriate swing set for the centre at a special rate.

A number of AEIOU's centres use Vuly trampolines in their programmes. To find out more, visit [www.vulyplay.com](http://www.vulyplay.com).



# THE EMPRINGHAM FAMILY

**The Empringham family are not only proud AEIOU parents, but devoted advocates for early intervention through their incredible fundraising efforts. The family was responsible for dreaming up the 2017 Coronis Golf Day, which saw \$20,000 raised for AEIOU's Sunshine Coast centre, a cause so close to their hearts. The money was used to install a new cubby house and mud kitchen, purchase additional toys and assist with centre renovations, all of which will benefit families for many years to come.**

For us it's all about the children. We want them to enjoy their time at AEIOU and that means having the right resources to make this happen. Through fundraising we'd like to provide anything that makes them happy and enjoy learning. For us, AEIOU continues to change our own child's life every day and we cannot speak highly enough of their work.

Our son Caelan started with AEIOU at three-years-old and was non-verbal or toilet-trained. He was still a baby and very sensitive. As his Mummy, I knew exactly what he wanted and needed, but to let strangers handle this five days a week was a big thing for both Caelan and us. Understandably, there were lots of tears at drop off time for about six weeks. I questioned my ability to do this to him. I felt like the worst mother in the world. And then, the switch flipped. The very next day

he ran to the gate, down the hall to his classroom and was happy and excited to be there. It was now my time for tears. It was definitely a turning point for us.

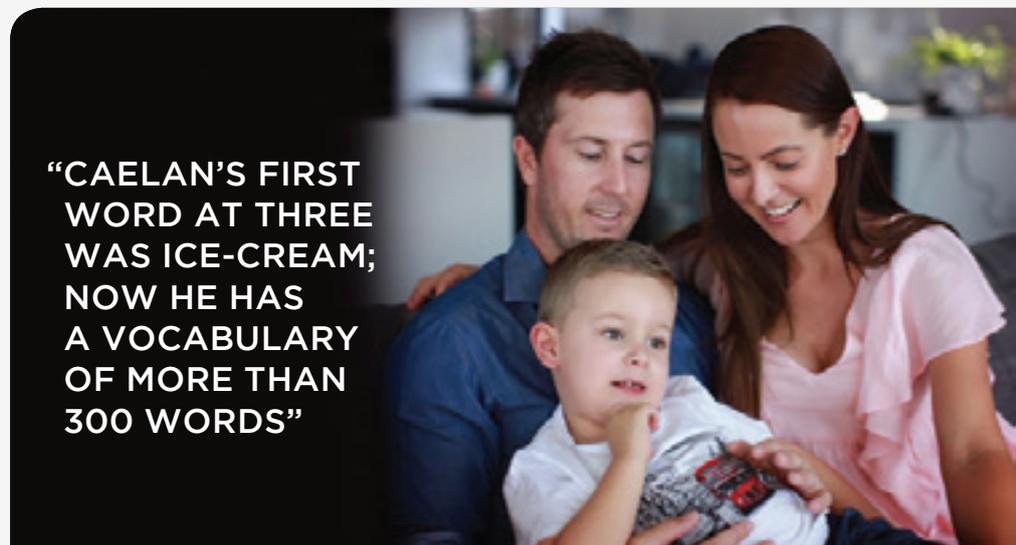
At first, we started noticing the little things such as putting his hat on to go outside and storing his lunch in the fridge. It marked the start of some independence, which was thrilling for us. The next big milestone was toilet training. I didn't know where to start with this task, but the AEIOU staff were professionals and Caelan picked it up so quickly.

But without a doubt, the biggest achievement for us was hearing Caelan's voice. It was so hard to think you may never hear the words 'mummy' or 'daddy', when all of your friends hear them every day. Humorously, Caelan's first word was 'ice cream', because of course he had his priorities in order! Now Caelan's vocabulary just increases all the time.

We love that he wants to try and say any word he hears. It has given Caelan such confidence. He's no longer scared of everyone he meets, is not worried to play around other children, is less frustrated and so eager to learn now he has been shown how. Just the other day he picked up a potato chip and said 'trapezoid', because that was the shape. I think we can expect great things from him, but most importantly he is happy and that's the main thing.

The future is now less daunting for Caelan and our family as a whole. And that's all because of AEIOU. We moved to the Sunshine Coast to allow Caelan to get the help he needed and we're so glad we made that decision. We're forever grateful.

*By Toni Empringham*



**“CAELAN'S FIRST WORD AT THREE WAS ICE-CREAM; NOW HE HAS A VOCABULARY OF MORE THAN 300 WORDS”**



## WHAT'S IT LIKE TO WORK AT AEIOU?

There's definitely something special about working at AEIOU Foundation. We were thrilled with Griffith University's film department offered to support a project of ours, giving us the chance to introduce some of the long-serving staff at AEIOU and give them a chance to say what it's like to be part of the team. As a result, we have two fantastic videos where you can meet some of our team members and get a feel for what they do, and why they find their work so rewarding. A big thank you to Shaun Charles, Technical Officer - Videographer from the School of Education who gave us his time to film and edit these videos. Also special thanks to Nayna Mistry, Anna Brodie, Sam Tsai, Stacey Sekoa and Joanne Stephen who participated in the project!

# TRANSITION SUPPORT PROGRAM PILOT



**This year, AEIOU Foundation has partnered with the Autism Hub to pilot a new transition support program. The program provides children, their families and educators with support, practical advice and strategies to ensure each child has the best opportunity to succeed in their next learning environment.**

Operating from the Gold Coast, the program is led by AEIOU Research and Assessment Manager Madonna Tucker and AEIOU Gold Coast Service Manager Lauren Reddington-Smith and has supported 17 families to date.

Each family receives up to 10 school visits in the three months following their exit from AEIOU Foundation. AEIOU's case worker liaises directly with the child's teaching team to implement strategies that support each child's individual need.

The program will operate throughout the remainder of the year. Regular evaluations will determine if it continues in 2019.

Lauren says anecdotally the service is making a difference, noting families from AEIOU Foundation need support at this crucial time.

"Historically, AEIOU has offered families two school visits, but this pilot provides us with an opportunity to build on that."

"Our families can find the process of moving to a school quite daunting, and we've found there's been a sense of relief that they can continue to rely on us," Lauren says.

"The great thing is, where schools have welcomed open communication and access, the results for the children have been overwhelmingly positive."

## ROCKS RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE



**Up to 30 families joined our team at Rocks Riverside Park in Seventeen Mile Rocks over two days for a great community experience. The goal of the day was simple - to have fun! Even better, families were supported by AEIOU's therapy and education team to ensure it was safe, manageable and accessible for everybody.**

Highlights included playing in the rock pools, on the flying fox, climbing across the jungle gyms and swinging as high as the sky. Children had a great time refining their gross motor skills, turn-taking skills and playing with peers. Parents also enjoyed the opportunity to chat to other families from the centre, and being out with a like-minded group. Even a few sun showers didn't dampen anybody's enthusiasm.

All of our centres host a number of internal and external community events throughout the year, to assist families and encourage inclusive communities.

Centres arrange up to four excursions each year, which families can vote on. Hands down everyone's favourite is Trevena Glen Farm on Brisbane's northside, where children can ride horses, pet the chickens, meet lots of furry friends and enjoy the country air.

# TOP PERFORMING FACEBOOK POSTS FOR THE QUARTER

Each month, our inspirational stories, fundraising snapshots and autism updates reach thousands in the social media stratosphere. If you aren't following us on social media, we encourage you to do so. It's a great way to see what is happening in the AEIOU network, and of course, to see the great progress being made by our children. You can find our Facebook page at [facebook.com/AEIOUfoundation/](https://facebook.com/AEIOUfoundation/)



**Total likes**  
**13,200+**

**Back to school**

3.1k reach  
69 likes  
4 comments  
5 shares

**Car wrap**

3.2k reach  
94 likes  
7 comments  
3 shares

**Grill'd fundraiser**

3.6k reach  
52 likes  
4 comments  
9 shares

**Functional play**

1.5k reach  
30 likes  
1 shares

**Pineapple room**

3.1k reach  
37 likes  
2 comments  
15 shares

**Brigitte 10 years**

3.1k reach  
145 likes  
32 comments  
4 shares

**Noah bear hunt**

2.3k reach  
85 likes  
14 comments  
6 shares

**Staff video**

3.1k reach  
63 likes  
2 comments  
10 shares

**Superhero therapists**

1.7k reach  
55 likes  
5 comments

**Dale request**

2.7k reach  
90 likes  
15 comments  
7 shares

**Heidi & Austin**

1.9k reach  
48 likes  
3 comments  
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**Easter fun**

2k reach  
46 likes  
1 shares

**Autism Awareness Day**

6.8k reach  
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# THE BURKE FAMILY



**As a friend once said to me, autism is a marathon, not a sprint. Our outcomes so far have been a continuous upward gain, rather than explosive shift. While I think every family hopes for that dramatic overnight transformation, there is so much satisfaction in the small achievements which change your family's life a little more every day. Success is also finding someone who can help you to both understand your child and learn how to be the parent they need. AEIOU has consistently provided our family with direction, strategies and hope for the future.**

As they say, two is company, three is a party! That was my motto when we decided to have our third baby. Our perfect little Freddie met all his early milestones and we were kept busy caring for our young, energetic family. Then at 18 months, I began to have concerns and realised that being the same parent I was to my two other children was not what Freddie needed. It became more than just delayed speech. He no longer ran to the door to greet my husband when he came home from work. He would shy from social interaction, had an odd obsession with sticks and was also a 'runner'. It was a very difficult journey to the stage of an official diagnosis. On the day of the appointment, I wore a blue dress, as a sign of acceptance.

I was initially relieved when Freddie was diagnosed as it gave a rationale for his challenging behaviour and would allow us to access the help we needed. But that relief was followed by grief. Our futures were now difficult to predict and was painful to know that despite both of us working professionally in the medical field, we could not "fix" our child. After we left the paediatrician's office, we drove directly to our closest AEIOU centre. When I was asked when our child had been diagnosed, I broke

down in tears with my letter from the paediatrician written only 30 minutes earlier. While we waited for a place to become available, every minute of his life became an opportunity for therapy. Meanwhile, I wished to meet a family with a child exactly the same as mine so I could ask them what worked and almost see into the future, but I felt that would never happen. You walk the journey alone. Until you get to AEIOU.

Freddie started with AEIOU just before his third birthday. The staff were warm, reassuring and not perplexed at all by the information I told them about my child. To me Freddie was incredibly vulnerable as he could speak but only a handful of words, wasn't toilet trained and tapped his face with sticks or similar objects constantly. But the teachers and therapists made me feel safe and included and helped our family in countless ways. They quickly turned his obsession with sticks to an advantage and within months, Freddie was toilet trained, would sit down for all his meals and began using more and more words. He has now learnt to walk and hold hands, something that makes life easier for our family every day. He can sing, dance and is extremely agile. He regularly tells me he loves me, which are words I longed for. The constant improvement in Freddie's ability to learn, speak, play and independently care for himself since beginning AEIOU cannot be undervalued. They have just given our family so much.

Next year Freddie will be eligible for Prep and we are currently exploring options for him with the guidance of AEIOU. It is extremely beneficial to have such a strong, proactive and supportive team behind us to help us navigate the schooling systems.

To future AEIOU families I say, be open minded and prepared to accept advice and support. You'll also need to be prepared to be consistent with your strategies. AEIOU teachers and therapists can be most effective when consistency is delivered in the home environment.

*By Katie Burke*

## NEW ASD CARE APP

**Keep your eyes peeled for a new app, due for release in July. CareCircle is a global initiative bringing together families, caregivers and medical subject matter experts onto a single, simple, and secure mobile platform.**

Founded by a community of 'Do-Gooders', those behind the app are passionate about making a difference to the Circle of Care available to families and carers who are entrusted with the well-being of a child or loved one living with a health condition or illness.

The mission of CareCircle is to address the absence of a social care system, with a goal to do this by globally connecting those with shared, lived experiences, extending the value of specialist therapies and interventions, and by bringing affordable tools and expertise to the non-clinical environments of the home, school, work and social settings.

Get on board with CareCircle via Facebook, or their website: [www.carecircle.com.au](http://www.carecircle.com.au) or [www.facebook.com/carecircle](http://www.facebook.com/carecircle).



**"YOU WALK THE JOURNEY ALONE. UNTIL YOU GET TO AEIOU."**

# THE IMPORTANCE OF ASSESSMENTS IN AEIOU'S EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM



**AEIOU takes pride in the program it delivers; it is built on evidence, and we maintain its quality and effectiveness by regularly conducting standardised assessments to measure children's progress and contribute data for research.**

Assessments not only provide an understanding of each child's individual strengths and weaknesses, but also provides further information to support the child's individual program. It also informs the AEIOU curriculum.

The data collected is also de-identified and used internally by AEIOU and externally in conjunction with our research partners to add to the understanding of autism in various ways (e.g., how do we help children transition from AEIOU, and are there subgroups of children within the autism spectrum) and aid to measure the effectiveness of early intervention strategies.

AEIOU Research and Assessment Manager Dr Madonna Tucker says "every child and family who come into the AEIOU program are provided standardised assessments on entry, at 12 monthly intervals, and when the child transitions from our program to their next learning environment".

The standardised assessments we use at AEIOU are chosen to provide an overall picture of thinking and reasoning, autism symptoms, motor skills, communication skills, and adaptive behaviour. "We do however see varied results from children on these assessments and this is very typical". Dr Tucker explains, "This is due to the fact that "many children on the spectrum demonstrate delays in different areas of functioning relative to neurotypical children of a similar age. Also many children on the spectrum display different skills relative to other children with autism". This is one of the reasons why autism is considered a 'spectrum'.

The Research and Assessment Team at AEIOU are specifically trained

in how to conduct standardised assessments with children with autism. Our staff are knowledgeable in strategies which encourage children to complete the assessments. "Before undertaking the assessments, we spend time getting to know each child, and we talk with staff who know the child well, to ensure we can administer the test in a stress free environment," Dr Tucker says.

"Each child reacts differently in an unfamiliar environment with a less familiar person – and this is okay. A different assessment room and assessor provides a way to gauge how your child is generalising their skills to new environments." Dr Tucker notes that being in an unfamiliar environment may be difficult and this is not unusual for many children on the spectrum. "We endeavour to make each child feel at ease and accommodate each child's needs during the assessment. If we feel that we are not getting the best out of a child, this is taken into account when the test is scored and noted in the report."

## CHAIN REACTION – SOUTH ISLAND SUCCESS!

**The results are in! This year's Chain Reaction Bike Challenge raised over \$1.5 million for major beneficiaries AEIOU Foundation and Ronald McDonald House.**

To counteract the enormous challenge that comes with a 1,000km bike challenge over seven days, this year's Chain Reaction Bike Challenge offered breath-taking views and spectacular scenery. Joining a peloton of 48, AEIOU directors and brothers James and Euan Morton flew the flag for AEIOU Foundation. Together, the pair raised over \$16,000 to go towards the total funds raised, well above their initial fundraising targets.



The event took riders to the South Island, New Zealand, where they trekked the iconic Arthur's Pass, cruised the South Island's stunning west coast, passed the beautiful Franz Joseph and Fox Glaciers and rode the Crown Range from Wanaka through to Queenstown.

Funds raised for AEIOU through this event will assist in the expansion of our service on the Northside of Brisbane.



# THREE CHEERS FOR VOLUNTEERS! .....

## Meet our volunteer - Georgia Dillon

### Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

I am currently in my final semester at university studying a Bachelor of Creative Industries (Entertainment) and Business (Human Resource Management) at Queensland University of Technology. I am very passionate about singing, love playing my guitar, and enjoy playing touch football with my friends.

### How did you come to be involved at AEIOU Foundation?

At the start of 2017 I was required to source an internship for my Creative Industries degree. After researching on the QUT careers database I stumbled across an internship advertised by AEIOU Foundation for a position in the events and fundraising team, and was successful in applying for the role.

### What was the most significant thing you learnt about what we do at AEIOU?

It made sense to me why AEIOU is so passionate about all the work they put into hosting and supporting various fundraising events - it's for the children. These events provide AEIOU with the opportunity to raise awareness and funds to provide a high quality early intervention program.

### What inspired you to volunteer at AEIOU?

Despite the compulsory internship, the reason why I chose AEIOU above other organisations was to experience what it's like to be an 'embedded creative'. I was able to put my skills and experience to good use while volunteering my time for the children. Volunteering for this organisation has been very enriching and it gives you a chance to serve others and help families in need.

### What would you say to someone who was thinking of volunteering at AEIOU?

You won't regret it! The staff are lovely and very welcoming, and you get to meet so many different people. It is inspiring to know that volunteering at AEIOU, no matter what department, means you get to help young children with autism and make a difference. It is a small sacrifice to give up your time when you think about how much these families sacrifice every day for their children.



# BRISBANE GETS AWESOME FOR AUTISM

**On Sunday 29 April, hundreds of children and families from across Brisbane joined us for a terrific community event, Let's Get Awesome for Autism, to mark Autism Awareness Month.**

There was something for everyone, with a tonne of special treats arranged for the kids, big and small. Favourites included sessions hosted by Ocean Life Education, Ginger Sport and Hello Africa drumming. We also had face painting, a jumping castle, ball pit, art and craft and more.

Topping it off, there was coffee with Espresso to Go, delicious food with Shanks A'Lot, a Rotary sausage sizzle and more to tempt the tastebuds.

The Hon. Jane Prentice MP, Federal Assistant Minister for Disability Services and Seven News sports journalist Pat Welsh joined us to launch the event, and Paulette Moser's new book, Turning Turtle, about raising triplets, two with autism, was also launched.

A big thank you to everyone who came on the day. We had a great time seeing so many familiar faces, and meeting new friends to AEIOU.

We also thank the staff from our centres and central office who gave their time to make it such a success.

# ARE YOU NDIS READY?

AEIOU Foundation provides intensive early intervention for young children with autism. Enrolments are open now, and if you have any questions about navigating the NDIS, we're here to help.

Find out more about how we provide individual support, or join us at one of our regular community workshops.

Call us today on **1300 273 435** or email **enrolments@aeiou.org.au**.



## OUR SUPPORTERS

