

eyes on
autism

Issue 23 Winter 2019



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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

It's an exciting time for AEIOU Foundation, as we prepare for steady, yet significant growth.

I am delighted to share our plans to introduce AEIOU's service in Canberra, made possible with funding from the John James Foundation. Construction will commence in March next year, with civil work on the site already underway.

The centre will be licensed to enrol up to 40 children, and we are very much looking forward to becoming part of the community in Canberra.

In other news, construction has commenced on our new centre in Bald Hills, which will replace our current service in Bray Park, and almost double our service capacity.

We are also expanding our service in Bundaberg, adding a new classroom and upgrading the playground and car

park at the centre. This will double our enrolments and eradicate the waitlist in the region.

AEIOU remains committed to research, with a number of projects underway. This includes but is not limited to a partnership with ARC Linkage, 'Improving Academic Outcomes by Moderating Anxiety in Children with Autism'.

Our fundraising team has been working hard on a number of events and community awareness activities. Highlights include Take a Hike Toowoomba, the annual Let's Get Awesome for Autism Family Fun Day and the Gala Ball. We were also delighted to again be the beneficiary of this year's Chain Reaction Queensland Challenge.

Another highlight this year was a collaboration with Autism Queensland

to produce a video 'What I Wish I Knew', where we interviewed people at various life stages regarding their experience with autism. The video premiered at Palace Barracks Cinema on World Autism Awareness Day at an uplifting event which brought together people across our community.

We continue to advocate for the autism community and the families in our service, working with partners such as the Autism Alliance and the Queensland Transition Advisory Group, to name just a few.

It's been an energetic start to the year, as ever at AEIOU. We take what we do seriously, and we love what we do. We're grateful for the community we have in this space, and we thank you for being part of it.

Alan Smith
CEO

CHAIR'S MESSAGE



I am delighted to announce AEIOU Foundation's Founding Director Dr James Morton AM has been appointed as Patron for AEIOU. The word 'patron' comes from the Latin word pater, which means 'father'. James could be considered the 'father of early intervention' in Queensland, so it's fitting he has accepted this role.

It's common knowledge that James and his wife Louise established AEIOU Foundation almost 15 years ago, and that he remains a tireless advocate for families raising young children with autism. An example is co-founding the Griffith University Autism Centre of Excellence.

As we grow, we remain committed to a high level of advocacy with regular engagement of government at all levels.

We are also keen to retain our roots. As we approach our 15th anniversary, we took the opportunity to talk to some of the first families who enrolled their children at AEIOU. We thought others might be interested to know where they are now, so we captured it on video and shared it at our Gala Ball. Take a look at it - you can find it on AEIOU's official Facebook page, or on our website. Each of those students are now in year 12. Their lives are ahead of them and it's humbling to imagine who they are becoming and where they'll go. Early intervention has the power to change lives, now and always.

This edition of Eyes on Autism brings you just a glimpse of what we've achieved at AEIOU so far this year, and the people who make up our organisation. I hope you enjoy it.

Susan Rix AM
Chair

MESSAGE FROM THE GM



One thing we can always be certain of in life is change, and that's certainly true here at AEIOU. The rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has delivered much-needed reform to the sector. However, the substantial changes in how families apply for and access funding for early intervention have also brought complexity and uncertainty.

As part of AEIOU's commitment to helping families navigate the NDIS, I'd like to acknowledge the great service provided by AEIOU's dedicated NDIS Coordinators. Sean Redmond and Katrina Ives are here to support you in your interactions with the NDIS and planning partners, working together to ensure the best possible outcome for your child. Obtaining a suitable plan can be a complicated process; so here are some tips that other parents have found helpful.

- Before you have your planning meeting, get in touch with Katrina or Sean by phoning (07) 3320 7500 or email ndis@aeiou.org.au. They'll be able to suggest questions for you to ask that can result in a better outcome.
- If you're on a waitlist for a place at an AEIOU centre and don't yet have a plan, let Katrina or Sean know. Your waitlist status may change the length of plan you need to request.
- If you're on a waitlist for a place and you do have an NDIS plan - again, please let them know. They can review it to ensure it's suitable for your child to attend our service.

Staying in touch with an AEIOU NDIS Coordinator can keep you up to date and informed about your rights, as we all adjust to the new national funding scheme. Together, we can set your child up for their best possible future.

Greg Johnson
General Manager

Acknowledgements

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GUESTS

SPARKLE AT

BIENNIAL

GALA

Almost 300 glamorous guests gathered at The Rivershed in Brisbane's new Howard Smith Wharves precinct on Saturday 8 June, for AEIOU's premier fundraising event: the 'Raise the Roof' Gala Ball.

An incredible \$135,000 was raised on the night, to be invested in expanding our service and supporting technology projects.

Guests were entertained by MC Pat Welsh, musicians Raw Metal, and danced the night away to the talented

local Baker Boys Band. As always, the auction was a highlight with competitive bidding all around the room on sought-after items.

Thank you to our amazing event sponsors: Griffith University, Suncorp, Craggy Range, Freedom Bathrooms, McKinney's Jewellers, Cricket Australia and Alex Perry. And thank you to all our stylish, generous guests. Together you've helped AEIOU create a lifetime of opportunities for even more young children with autism.

WHERE ARE *They now?*

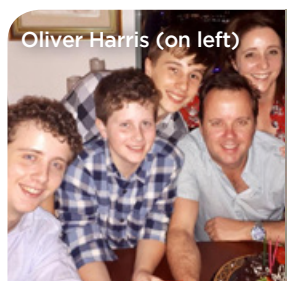
It's been nearly 15 years since AEIOU Foundation first opened its doors. With humble beginnings, our first centre was based in a character-filled old church in the Brisbane suburb of Moorooka. There were 12 children enrolled, and six therapists and educators to support them to reach their goals. All of those children are now approaching adulthood. Many have stayed in touch, and remain great supporters of AEIOU Foundation.

Oliver Harris, now 17, can remember his time at AEIOU. He started at age three and made several lifelong friends. Oliver is now in his final year at Marist College Ashgrove. The eldest of three boys, he works hard at school and has enjoyed a number of highlights in the year already. These include his school's senior badge ceremony, attending his school formal and being part of the MATES Ministry Program, which serves the community in a number of ways, including a weekly BBQ with homeless people in West End. Oliver is a talented artist and plans to study graphic art when he finishes school.

Sheridan Buckley is also in year 12, attending Brigidine College. Sheridan remembers AEIOU Foundation and the friend she made during her time there. She was three when she was diagnosed with autism, and her

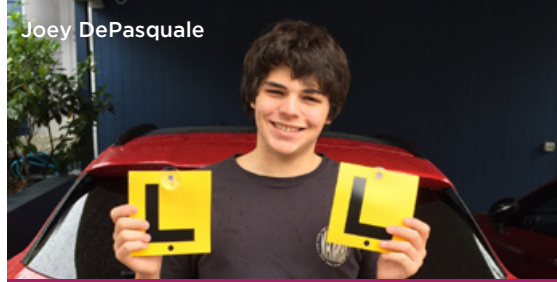
parents had no idea what to expect. Would her autism remain severe? Would it get worse? Could things improve? These are all questions they asked themselves. Sheridan flourished at AEIOU, and she and her family are very proud of how she applies herself to school and what she has achieved already. Her school has proven enormously supportive, and she has a number of interests including bird watching, hiking and sewing.

Joey DePasquale was the first of the original cohort to graduate from AEIOU Foundation. Fast forward to 2019 and this confident and articulate 18-year-old from Padua College has big plans for the future. He has already spent more than 60 hours behind the wheel as he prepares to sit for his provisional driver's licence in the coming months and looks forward to the sense of freedom it will bring. It's a long way from his first memories of AEIOU, where he first learned to ride a bike. At school, Joey has his head in the game and is already studying a Diploma of Business through Padua to give him a jump start next year. He plans to attend university and eventually take over the family food service distribution business. Joey is also a talented rugby union player, travelling to Europe last year as part of a school tour.



Oliver Harris (on left)

Sheridan Buckley



Joey DePasquale

The birth of AEIOU

Before AEIOU, there was little support for children with autism in Australia. AEIOU was founded in 2005 by James and Louise Morton, two parents who had seen the powerful impact of early intervention for their son Andrew. Andrew Morton was two years old when he was diagnosed, and his family was experiencing significant challenges on a daily basis. After gaining access to a pilot program, their world changed. But when this program closed, never to be re-opened, the Mortons knew something had to be done to help Andrew and other children with autism to reach their full potential.

GROUND-BREAKING NEW AUTISM HUB FOR North Brisbane

In early 2020, North Brisbane will be home to a world-class autism hub, with \$4.5 million in Australian Government funding delivering early intervention for around 50 children per year and capacity for research, training and outreach services.

Work on the site commenced in May, with Member for Dickson Peter Dutton MP and Member for Petrie Mr Luke Howarth joining AEIOU Foundation's Founding Director Dr James Morton AM for the ground-breaking ceremony in February.

With waitlists for intensive therapy extending to up a year for young children with autism in the area, the centre will be a blessing. It will eliminate the waiting period and also serve as a hub for families in need of support and expert advice.

AEIOU CEO Alan Smith commended the Australian Government for investing in the futures of young children with autism.

"This demonstrates commitment to young families, and the community. Early intervention is life-changing. Not only does it improve the lives of individuals as well as their families, it also has a positive effect on our economy long-term; for every dollar invested in a young child with autism, there is an \$11 return. Just as importantly, our communities are richer for the increased participation of these individuals," Mr Smith said.

Located at Attunga Street, Bald Hills and operated by AEIOU Foundation, the land is offered on a peppercorn lease by the Anglican Schools Commission. Designed by Buchan Architects, the hub will be constructed by Hutchinson Builders.

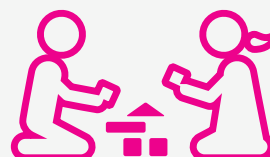


NEW CLASSROOM FOR BUNDABERG

Our Bundaberg centre is growing! Construction has now commenced on a new classroom which means we can double our service capacity in the area. The classroom will accommodate 12 children on a full-time basis, reducing the long waiting times currently experienced in the area.

The development also includes a playground upgrade and a car-park extension. AEIOU's long-term supporters Hutchinson Builders are managing the project. They're well-versed in what we do at AEIOU, which helps to deliver a seamless process for our local families and staff.

Centre Manager Amanda Rogers says the children thoroughly enjoy playing witness to the works, with plenty of exciting machinery onsite to complete the project. "This is a great time for Bundaberg, and we're thrilled to be able to deliver this extension to our service. We look forward to welcoming a number of new families to our centre in the near future."



Camira workshop

DRAWS CROWD

To wrap Autism Awareness Month, AEIOU Camira hosted a free community workshop on “supporting children with autism”, which generated significant local interest from health and education professionals, as well as families.

The 90-minute session, held at YMCA Springfield Lakes Community Centre, endeavoured to equip participants with enhanced skills to support a child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and added new strategies to their toolkit to assist with managing challenging behaviours. It was also a valuable networking opportunity to

mingle with like-minded individuals and ask AEIOU staff questions across a range of topics. More than 60 people attended on the evening, with a number of additional enquiries for future sessions.

Introductory events like this one are held across various areas throughout the year and are suitable for any person supporting young children with an autism diagnosis in a home, educational or healthcare setting. Everyone is welcome to attend. For more details about upcoming events, visit visit aeiou.org.au/community.

TOP ACCOLADE FOR AEIOU BOARD MEMBER

The AEIOU team warmly congratulates Board Director, Dr Bev Rowbotham, for her recognition in the 2019 Australia Day Honours. Bev was awarded the honour of Officer (AO) in the General Division of the Order of Australia for, “distinguished service to medicine through roles with professional associations, to pathology, and to medical education.” A haematologist and Associate Professor in the School of Medicine at the University of Queensland, Bev’s numerous achievements include being five times elected Chair of the Federal Council of the Australian Medical Association.

She and her husband are the parents of four sons, one of whom has a disability, and she has spent 19 years serving on boards of organisations that provide education and disability services to children. Bev joined the AEIOU board in 2015, and since then our organisation has benefitted tremendously from her extensive governance experience in healthcare, commerce, government and the non-profit sector. We are delighted that her commitment and expertise has been recognised in this way, and we look forward to working with such an inspirational leader in the future. Congratulations Bev!

CEO CELEBRATES DECADE OF MAKING A difference

In May, CEO Alan Smith reached his 10-year milestone with AEIOU Foundation, which was marked with a surprise celebration attended by staff, family and friends at AEIOU’s Central Office.

Looking back to 2009, the service operated four centres and employed around 60 staff. In the time since then, Alan has steered the growth of the organisation with extraordinary vision. Today, AEIOU operates its service from 10 centres with expansion plans underway, employing a team of 360 personnel.

AEIOU Founding Director and Patron James Morton AM credited the evolution through Alan’s ability to empower a team.

“I think we can say AEIOU is Alan and Alan is AEIOU because they’re such a big part of each other,” he said.

James also referenced the unique personal relationship the pair had, with Alan becoming a patient of James’ during his treatment for leukaemia in 2015.

“He’s come out of it like this invincible machine and more determined than ever before.”

AEIOU Chair Susan Rix AM was also earnest in her praise for Alan’s commitment to the organisation.

“10 years is a milestone and we really appreciate the good work you’ve done for this organisation,” she said.

However, always humble, Alan was quick to turn the attention back to the team effort.

“It’s the team that makes AEIOU achieve the success we do,” he said.

“It’s been a lovely journey... it has gone in a heartbeat for me. I look forward to the years ahead.”

Alan with his grandson



Alan with AEIOU Chair Susan Rix



“Quite simply, AEIOU saved us. They gave us our son back.”

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE O'DEA FAMILY

This heartfelt open letter was penned by AEIOU mum Liz O'Dea to all those who supported son Jack through his early intervention journey. For Liz, the team's belief in Jack was unwavering through the tough times, and together they celebrated the victories of each small goal achieved. In the end, there was more than one life changed beyond measure.

Jack is our third child of four. He is funny, joyful, charming, energetic and loves to cuddle. But Jack was not always like this. In the early days he was doing normal baby things, just like our other children, except when it came to eating and talking. He was always hyperactive to the extreme, with no sense of danger, and had difficulty coping with any change.

By 18 months of age Jack had slowly slipped away from us. He became separate from the rest of the family and could not speak. He suffered through meltdowns, could not tolerate shoes and wearing most clothing. When Jack turned three we knew in our gut that things were not right. We felt we had lost our child and decided to seek help.

We were living interstate at the time and could not get access to the support we needed. So we packed up and moved back to our original home of Toowoomba where we would have family and friends around us. We put Jack into speech and occupational therapy as soon as we were settled, but saw no improvement. It was difficult to watch and Jack's struggle was painful. He was assessed and misdiagnosed with a communication delay at around three and a half.

We were relieved, but in our hearts we knew it wasn't right. We changed day-care centres and received wonderful support from his teachers, and also continued with his therapies, seeing a slight improvement. It was at this time we heard our first word: GO. However Jack was still struggling. The night terrors had taken over our lives and the meltdowns had Jack banging his head into walls and floors at an alarming rate. He couldn't play with other children, including his siblings, and couldn't cope if his mum and dad weren't there. We felt locked out of our child. We couldn't take Jack shopping or on any outing at all. We were at our lowest, worst and most desperate and more frightened than we had ever been. We sought a second opinion on Jack's fourth birthday and received a diagnosis of ASD Level 2.

It was the best and worst day of our lives. Finally, we could access all the help available for Jack, but with that came the grief - the life you saw for your child on the day they are born was suddenly gone. It was replaced with the complete unknown of what his life would now look like. We accessed the NDIS immediately and had the option of sending Jack to AEIOU Foundation. It was a huge decision as we had just seen improvement in his therapies, and he was attending day-care and coping. But his misdiagnosis had cost Jack time, so we made the scary decision to change everything Jack knew and send him to AEIOU Toowoomba.

Jack started his full-time early intervention in August 2017 and quite

simply they saved us. They gave us our son back with Jack thriving from day one. Within two weeks his words had started, with the staff recording down two pages' worth. Jack smiled again. We started being able to communicate with him and life slowly got better. His meltdowns all but stopped. The night terrors left us. We set small goals to start with. We wanted Jack to say Mum and Dad and it was tears of sheer joy when we first heard those words. Then Jack's sibling wanted him to say their names and well, he did. He also said "I love you". Every goal we have set for Jack, he has worked so hard and his achieved them all.

Jack has been with AEIOU for 20 months and has achieved so much. He is now talking in short sentences, plays with his peers and his siblings, tolerates wearing shoes and socks, tracksuits and long sleeve shirts. Jack eats a proper breakfast and lunch. He can cope with outings and loves to go to the shops. These things would never have happened without the hard work of the team at AEIOU Toowoomba, and their care, love and support of our whole family. We can never thank them enough for the exciting future they have given Jack, especially now, as he has started at a mainstream kindergarten during his pre-school year. This letter is for all who have helped Jack, so when you are having a bad day, and don't think you are making a difference, you can know you saved not only a child but his whole family.



TEENS TAKE CHARGE IN AUTISM HIKE



On a crisp Sunday morning in March, a group of enthusiastic young problem solvers from Toowoomba Grammar converged on Queens Park, ready to volunteer for AEIOU's signature Take A Hike event. When they saw the grass in the field was too long for the young runners in the maiden "1km DASH" (for children under 10), they took matters into their own hands, sourcing a hand mower and paving the way for the youngest competitors. Many of the teenage volunteers then jumped in for the race itself, marshalling the little runners and keeping enthusiasm levels high. It's the kind of pitch-in attitude we're very accustomed to here at AEIOU and a great example of big-heartedness coming from the next generation of philanthropists.

As always, the event was well attended, with dozens of competitors across the 21km, 10.5km and 5km courses. The event raised vital funds which will directly support early intervention at the Toowoomba centre.

Townsville

CAMARADERIE SHINES THROUGH ADVERSITY

Only a few months back, images of Townsville were plastered over the media as residents and businesses experienced unprecedented and devastating flooding. But from their hardship came stories of true camaraderie, friendship and strength, including within AEIOU's walls.

While our centre at Kirwan thankfully did not flood, they faced the challenges of the resulting mould buildup. Unfortunately, some of our staff members and families did not fare so well, with some receiving significant damage to their homes.

In true Townsville spirit, the team came together not only to ensure the centre could be up and running again in just two weeks, they also rallied around their peers and centre families in a highly admirable way.

Meanwhile, AEIOU's Central Office team in Brisbane, buoyed by the solidarity shown up north, launched an internal appeal amongst all staff to raise money to support the two staff members severely affected. The money has since been donated and was very well received.

AEIOU IN THAILAND

Research and Assessment Manager Madonna Tucker and Head of Clinical Delivery Claire McIvor were recently invited to speak at the conference for the Autistic Thai Foundation (Autism Parents Association in Thailand) as part of their World Autism Day campaign. The pair were two of five international speakers and presented in two capacities.

The first was a special lecture on "autism-specific early intervention", where Madonna spoke about what early intervention is and the essential elements to an early intervention service. She also provided examples of early intervention services and programs (including AEIOU) from Australia. The second session was a panel discussion on "Education System at Service Centre Level". This presentation by Claire highlighted AEIOU and discussed curriculum and process issues surrounding how we implement our program. From all reports, it was an amazing opportunity and AEIOU was very well-represented and highly respected.



Family fun day ENCORE HITS HIGH NOTE

Last year, we knew we were onto a good thing with the inaugural Let's Get Awesome for Autism family fun day. But the turnout we received on a sunny Sunday at Kurilpa Park this April still managed to surpass our expectations!

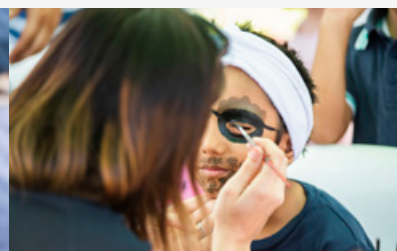
Hundreds of families, both new and familiar faces, converged on the banks of the Brisbane River to help us promote inclusiveness and celebrate the wonderful children we support.

To keep the kids entertained there were games with Ginger Sport Soccer, an Ocean Life Education demonstration, Barnyard Babies petting zoo, jumping castle, face painting and art activities, all set to the beat of Hello Africa's interactive drumming spectacle. When it came time for a bite to eat, Rotary volunteers put on a sausage sizzle, and we were also joined by a number of delicious food trucks.

A sincere thank you to all staff who freely gave their time to support the families in attendance and run the activities, as well as our friendly ambassadors Pat Welsh and Ian Skippen. We were also proud to be joined by Brisbane City Councillor Jonathan Sri, who made a generous donation through the Lord Mayor's Suburban Initiative Fund; along with Kathy Hoopmann who has written more than 20 books for children and adults.

CEO Alan Smith said the fun day was once again a "tremendous event".

"We had a great turnout, with lots of engaged, happy families and a great opportunity to raise awareness for AEIOU and the service we deliver," he said.



TEAM PLAYERS CELEBRATED THROUGH STEP awards

Earlier this year, the AEIOU Reward and Recognition Program was launched to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements and outstanding performance of our staff. There are four award categories which align with each of our 'STEP' organisational values. The successful nominees embody the values from each of the four categories, with quarterly announcements being made, followed by an Employee of the Year in December.

Our inaugural quarterly winners have recently been announced, and we'd like to acknowledge these team players for making an invaluable contribution to AEIOU and consistently going above and beyond.

Support:

Louise Nichols, Centre Manager, Camira

Louise was nominated for her supportive nature and for the lengths she goes to in supporting the team on a daily basis and when there are changes. She maintains a positive and can-do attitude which has helped shape the wonderful culture at AEIOU Camira.



Excellence:

Amandeep Kaur, Learning Facilitator, Logan

Amandeep was nominated for her energetic attitude and always being ready to help and support where possible. She is known for her compassionate and empathetic nature. She shows initiative, shares ideas and takes constructive feedback onboard to improve herself as an educator, and is always willing to learn.



Teamwork:

Rebekka Sutcliffe, Room Leader, Bray Park

Rebekka has mentored 30+ learning facilitators at Bray Park over the last eight years and many new therapists have remarked how Rebekka has helped them settle into AEIOU. Rebekka shows great versatility and leadership when there are staff shortages or sudden challenges.



Passion:

Cathy Pitkin, Receptionist, Central Office

Cathy's nomination validates her passion for customer service. Cathy looks out for others, notices when help is needed and is usually the first to offer assistance. She looks for opportunities to brighten people's day, she always follows through and shows exceptional commitment. Cathy is often referred to by her colleagues as a 'saint'.



WHAT I WISH I KNEW: On Autism

To mark World Autism Awareness Day, AEIOU Foundation and Autism Queensland teamed up to produce a short film 'What I Wish I Knew', which premiered at Palace Barracks Cinema on Tuesday 2 April. More than 150 guests joined the event, which introduced five local families at various stages of their lives, along with subject matter experts Associate Professor David Trembath and Dr Jill Ashburner.

Our storytellers included Annabel Morton, whose brother Andrew inspired the establishment of AEIOU; Richard Adebisi whose daughter Ariana graduated from AEIOU at the end of 2018; and Tim and Judy Sharp. Tim, 31, is an internationally recognised artist and an Ambassador of AEIOU Foundation. The film also featured Danielle Butcher, a director at Autism Queensland whose son Ben has autism, alongside Clay and Laura Lewis. Clay is 17 and about to graduate from high school. He has established a successful business, *Clay needs no moulding*.

Guests were also delighted with the feature film *Life, Animated*; an award-winning documentary about a boy and his family who overcame great challenges with the help of Disney films. Now in his 20s, Owen Suskind has captured the hearts of millions over the world, including everybody seated in the cinema at the event.

Special thanks to all of those who joined us on the night and especially to each of those who shared their personal journeys and thoughts for this film.

We look forward to more events like this one, and the opportunity to share more stories about people of all ages.



“We have changed the outlook for Ariana.”

THE ADEBIYI FAMILY

Each January, a new cohort of parents begin navigating the world of Prep for the first time, often struggling with the conflicting emotions that come with sending their child into unknown. For families who have a child with autism, this time can understandably bring with it an additional layer of complexity and uncertainty. Here at AEIOU, we focus on identifying the necessary prerequisite skills each child needs to be able to move towards success at school, something we often refer to as “learning to learn”. For Brisbane mum Maria, this support saw her daughter Ariana flourish in the lead up to her first day as a “preppie”.

We knew Ariana was ready for school and felt like we had done all the right preparations for this next stage of her life. A lot of this I credit to the wonderful work that AEIOU has done with Ariana over the past two years. Without the intensive early intervention, I think her transition and readiness would have been far more challenging.

Ariana is a very curious and active child who loves adventure and I think that she sees school as a fun place and somewhere that has lots of learning and exploring opportunities for her. She has been really excited about starting school for some time. When we visited the school to pick up her book pack she didn't want to leave. We had to explain to her that it was still school holidays and she would have to wait patiently a little longer.

As a mum, I was feeling a mixture of emotions about this new chapter in our lives. On one hand I was excited and eager and on the other hand, anxious and nervous. I know that the road ahead is not always going to be easy or smooth sailing, but I feel that we have changed the outlook for Ariana by accessing the AEIOU program, and that means a lot to me.

She made so much progress in the two years that we were at AEIOU. When she started, Ariana had limited language and would communicate by crying, screaming or pointing. However, within weeks of starting, we noticed her greeting staff when she walked into the centre of a morning. After six months, Ariana was honestly like a different child. She was using a lot more words to communicate and really engaging with us, which made a huge difference to our family life. We saw improvements in her social skills and functional play, as she chose to play with friends rather than on her own. Now two years on, Ariana's language has really exploded, and she is talking in 4-5 word sentences. I'm amazed every time I hear her chatting and I love listening to the sound of her voice. She also really enjoys playing games with friends and is motivated to seek that companionship. She formed some close friendships at AEIOU, which as a parent, was beautiful to see.

Aside from helping her achieve communication and social milestones, AEIOU did a great deal around preparing Ariana for school by building her classroom skills and familiarising her with classroom routines. This included things like mat time (being able to sit and listen to a story), following instructions, asking for help, taking turns, fine motor skills, pencil grip, and learning alphabet and numbers. The staff were also in regular contact, which helped us to keep track of Ariana's development as we moved closer towards her school transition and to reinforce the learning at home.

As a family we started preparing for school quite a few months prior so we could make the transition as smooth as possible. We started by talking about school and then visited a few times with her. The school also arranged a number of transition sessions at the end of the year for

all the new prep students. She really enjoyed these and by the final visit seemed quite comfortable and relaxed within the school environment. We also involved Ariana in all the purchases associated with school, so she felt part of the process. She can be a little bit headstrong when it comes to clothing and didn't really take to her uniform straightaway, so, we practiced wearing the uniform at home to allow her to get used to it and accept that this is what she needs to wear to school. Fortunately, this strategy has paid off and she is quite happily wearing the uniform now.

On a final note, we are just so grateful for our time with AEIOU and the impact it's had on Ariana's development and our family life. The staff at AEIOU are amazing to say the least. We have not come across a more dedicated, passionate, enthusiastic and professional team of people. When I reflect, my fondest memories are of the staff who were like family to us. They supported us through our journey, reassured us when things seemed hard, and matched our enthusiasm when we celebrated successes. We now have every confidence Ariana can achieve anything with the right supports and today we feel positive about her future. Just because she has autism doesn't mean she has to dream less or dream small. We think it's just the opposite and will always support her to believe in herself.

By Maria Adebiyi



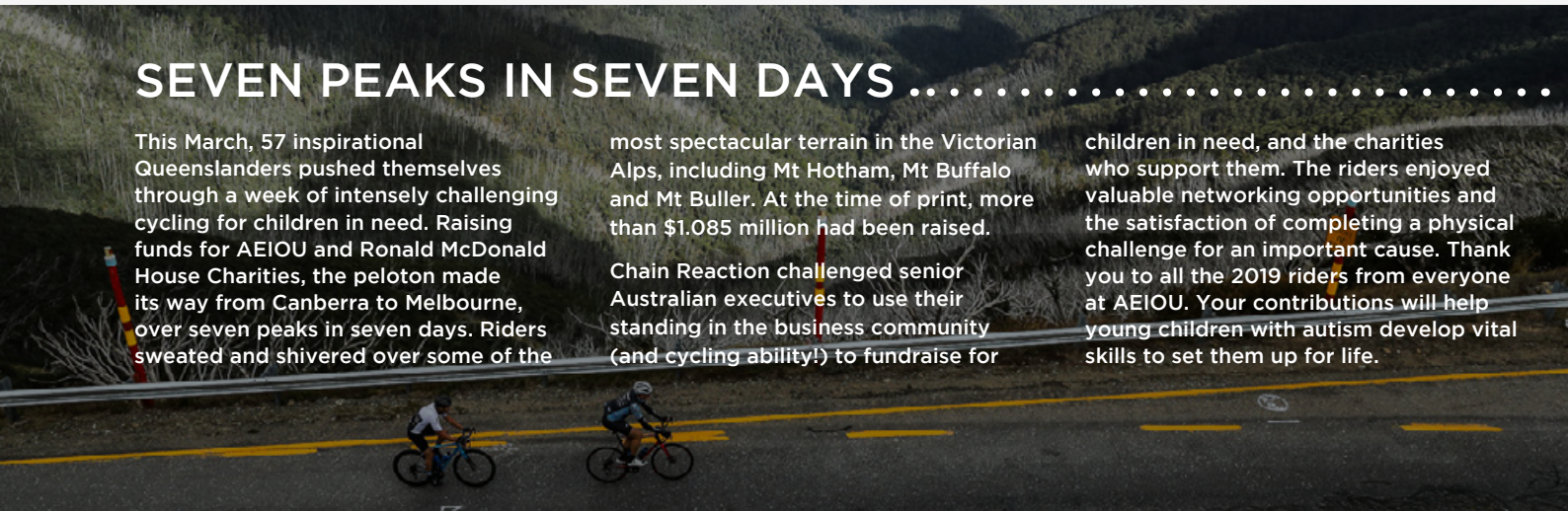
SEVEN PEAKS IN SEVEN DAYS

This March, 57 inspirational Queenslanders pushed themselves through a week of intensely challenging cycling for children in need. Raising funds for AEIOU and Ronald McDonald House Charities, the peloton made its way from Canberra to Melbourne, over seven peaks in seven days. Riders sweated and shivered over some of the

most spectacular terrain in the Victorian Alps, including Mt Hotham, Mt Buffalo and Mt Buller. At the time of print, more than \$1.085 million had been raised.

Chain Reaction challenged senior Australian executives to use their standing in the business community (and cycling ability!) to fundraise for

children in need, and the charities who support them. The riders enjoyed valuable networking opportunities and the satisfaction of completing a physical challenge for an important cause. Thank you to all the 2019 riders from everyone at AEIOU. Your contributions will help young children with autism develop vital skills to set them up for life.



Parents invited

TO MAKE WAVES THROUGH RESEARCH PROJECT



Families at AEIOU are invited to participate in a research project entitled *'Parental perspectives on early intervention services for children with autism'*. This research will provide a voice for parents. With an ever-increasing number of services available to assist families with a child on the spectrum, the sheer volume of information and choices can be overwhelming. This research will help us to understand how parents made their journey to AEIOU. The information will be made into educational

resources to assist other parents to make informed choices about the support their child will receive. We also hope to make information available to government bodies to increase their awareness of the critical role parents play in evaluating and choosing services for their child.

For more information about this project, or to contribute, please phone the research team on 07 3212 1107 or email kelly.hinckfuss@aeiou.org.au.

Registrations now open FOR TAKE A HIKE BRISBANE

Join us for our signature event at Kurilpa Park (South Brisbane) on Sunday 13 October 2019.

There are three distance options: 21km, 10.5km and 5km to choose from and everyone is welcome to participate!

All funds raised will support Brisbane families receiving vital therapy and care at AEIOU Foundation.

For more information or to register, visit www.takeahike.org.au



Get your team together and lead the fundraising charge!

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Catherine Focken | Grants and Funding Specialist Central Office

When did you join the AEIOU family?

May 2018.

How would you describe AEIOU in three words?

Supportive. Engaging. Fun!

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

As my role is heavily focussed around raising money for the centres, this one is fairly simple. The happy, excited responses I receive from centre managers when I tell them that we have received funding for the vital resources they need to deliver our service.

What has been your most defining moment with AEIOU?

The first time I visited one of our centres. I honestly had no idea of the intense, demanding job that each staff member does every single day, and they do it so well. They honestly are committed to improving the life of each child in their care - it was certainly an eye-opening experience for me!

Name someone who inspires you and why?

My kids inspire me - they lead busy lives, they have cranky moments - but they are still pretty good people.

How do you like to recharge?

Apart from watching Game of Thrones, I love spending time with my family, hanging out with my dog, cooking, reading and doing a bit of shopping!

Sabine Glynn | Program Manager Gold Coast

When did you join the AEIOU family?

Early 2019.

How would you describe AEIOU in three words?

Family. Supportive. Fun.

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

Going into a classroom and seeing a child succeed with a goal they have previously struggled with still gives me goosebumps all over!

What has been your most defining moment with AEIOU?

When I had just started with AEIOU I received a call from a distressed mum - her child was engaging in severe self-injurious behaviours in the middle of the car park and she had trouble getting him to move, while simultaneously keeping her second child safe. I ran out to help, followed by another staff member that had seen me running and wanted to make sure all was ok. By the time we arrived, yet another staff member was already helping mum, as she had just arrived to start her shift and seen mum struggle. With a bit of teamwork we got everybody in safe and sound. This moment showed me that everybody at AEIOU truly cares - we are all here to support the children, their families, and each other.

How do you like to recharge?

I love recharging at the beach with my family and our dog - just watching everybody goof around to their heart's content, have a swim, and enjoy a nice coffee.

Rhona Newell | Speech Pathologist Nathan

When did you join the AEIOU family?

February 2016.

How would you describe AEIOU in three words?

Rewarding. Challenging. Inspiring.

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

The most rewarding part of my job is not seeing it as a job at all. I go to work every morning happy and leave every evening feeling the same. I'm surrounded by the most determined, talented and hard-working team that will go above and beyond for the children and the families we have the pleasure of working with.

What is the most interesting job you held before AEIOU?

I worked in a secondary school supporting lots of young people on the spectrum to transition to college. It's so interesting to find myself at the beginning of that journey now, before they even begin school.

What is your personal philosophy?

Speak slowly (I'm Irish).



Welcome TO THE TEAM

Shannon Nitschke | Occupational Therapist

Sippy Downs

1. Why were you first drawn to AEIOU Foundation?

I was excited by the opportunity to work closely with children within a transdisciplinary team. AEIOU Foundation's values and goals aligned well with my professional aspirations and it seemed like the perfect opportunity to incorporate my skillset and passion for child development all into one!

2. What do you most look forward to about your new role?

I look forward to working collaboratively with the children, families and transdisciplinary team in achieving their identified goals.

3. What is the most interesting job you held before AEIOU?

Before my role at AEIOU, I worked within a community-based practice here on the Sunshine Coast. I was fortunate enough to work within a range of different settings with a wide variety of demographics. I specialised in oedema management, major home modifications, DVA, NDIS and transitional care programs. It definitely kept me on my toes!

4. What is your personal philosophy?

"Nothing will work unless you do."
- Maya Angelou

5. Name someone who inspires you and why?

My Mum - Cathy. She is selfless, kind and loving. She inspires me every day to do things for others, not for return, but out of love and kindness!

Catherine Focken

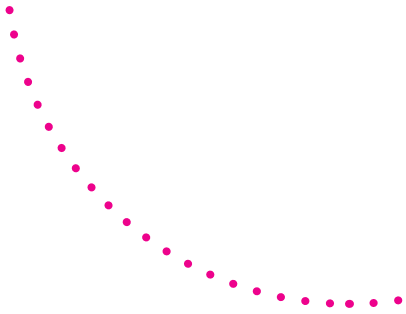


Sabine Glynn



Rhona Newell





ANXIETY, AUTISM *and* ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

As always, our research team remains committed to a range of studies. We are very excited to have been awarded a grant in conjunction with Griffith University, Autism Centre of Excellence (ACE), Macquarie University and Newcastle on Tyne (United Kingdom). Awarded by ARC Linkage, this international collaboration is entitled “*Improving academic outcomes by moderating anxiety in children with autism.*” This is particularly impressive for those involved given the competitive grant space.

The grant was submitted by Chief Investigators Professor Deborah Keen,

Dr Dawn Adams, Professor Ronald Rapee, Dr Kathryn Simpson along with Partner Investigators, Dr Jacqueline Rodgers from University of Newcastle on Tyne (UK) and Dr Madonna Tucker from AEIOU Foundation.

This research addresses a critical problem for children with autism, their families, and educators: how to improve educational outcomes for this population. Taking a novel and innovative approach, the research will explore anxiety as a possible mediator in the relationship between autism and academic enablers. The research employs a pioneering method by

being the first study to experimentally manipulate anxiety in 4-6 year old children with autism as a means to explore the relationship between autism and academic enablers. This project uses a longitudinal design over three years. The findings from this research can help families who have children experiencing autism and anxiety, and provide a *new* intervention pathway that focuses on prevention and treatment of anxiety in young children with autism. The innovative program, if found to improve academic enablers, could be rolled out around Australia.

AEIOU... AND U!.....

We love sharing our day-to-day with our AEIOU social community, celebrating our little ones’ successes and triumphs. From Facebook to Instagram, AEIOU’s social community brings together almost 16,000 people, including current and past families, our generous donors and fundraisers, the AEIOU team and the wider ASD community.

Are you connected with AEIOU?



@aeioufoundation
AEIOUFoundation

Here’s some of our *favourite* photos online this year:



♥ 215 likes
💬 9 comments



♥ 59 likes



♥ 50 likes
💬 4 comments



♥ 40 likes



♥ 11 likes



♥ 35 likes



♥ 35 likes
💬 4 comments



♥ 41 likes

CATCHING UP WITH THE

Blacksmith Family



We love nothing more than catching up with past children and hearing about all their achievements and milestones since graduating from AEIOU. We're often reminded of the incredible lengths our families go to in order to give their child access to early intervention, sometimes moving far away from home, and it brings us joy to hear it was all worthwhile. For the Blacksmith family of Adelaide, AEIOU gifted them with friendships they will cherish forever. Lucky for us, mum Lissa kindly stopped by for a chat to tell us what they've been up to since attending our Bray Park centre in 2012-2013.

"We had tried kindergarten in Adelaide but it wasn't a good fit for Milo; he was in the thick of autism at that early stage, with a lack of communication skills, a multitude of sensory issues and fixed interests, which lead to frustration, meltdowns, and a stressful time for him (and us). I didn't often read the newspaper but one day I did and in it was an article about a politician visiting AEIOU in Brisbane. After reading the article I rang AEIOU straight away and realised this is where Milo needed to go to receive crucial early intervention. I flew up and visited the Bray Park centre, loved what I saw and enrolled him on the spot. It all had to happen fast and it certainly wasn't easy, but within a whirlwind of four weeks we had moved from Adelaide to Brisbane. I was lucky enough to get a transfer with work and found a place to rent in that short time period.

Milo was four and a half years old when he started at Bray Park AEIOU in July 2012. He accomplished so many things in the year and a half he was at the centre. Things like following instructions, asking for help with the things he couldn't do, and toilet training. I even appreciated the mastery of simple tasks, like waiting, taking turns, playing and participating in a group. I always remember the morning circle songs, where the kids would each take turns to say 'hello' and join in the song. I was so happy when I heard Milo singing these songs to himself when he was at home. His speech and communication improved, which was assisted by using PECS cards, both at AEIOU and at home.

One of the most important things to Milo and myself were the friendships made. I still remember picking him up one afternoon and being shown a picture of him and Charlette strolling hand-in-hand around the playground, just quiet and content in each other's company. A friend! It was one of the many things I worried he wouldn't have and so it melted my heart. Milo still has his friendships from AEIOU, even after four years apart, and our families keep in contact and make the effort to see each other every year. I never expected AEIOU would create such a supportive network for parents too, and I was so lucky to be surrounded by a lovely group of mums going through similar experiences.

Our Milo is a lovely, gentle boy. We are back in Adelaide now and he is doing well at Aspect Treetops School. He loves reading, dance classes, flight academy at Bounce, swimming, Tutti music and drum lessons - he's even reading sheet music! Lucky for us, his aptitude for music was picked up back in the early days by one of his AEIOU teachers, Lisa.

I think it is fabulous Adelaide families now have access to an AEIOU centre locally. Getting the early intervention at AEIOU certainly made a big difference to Milo's future and our family and I can't recommend it highly enough.

By Lissa Dinning



PHILANTHROPY *at its finest*

AEIOU is delighted to announce Scott Hutchinson and the Hutchinson Builders team have been named as Queensland Community Foundation’s Corporate Philanthropist of the Year for 2019. Proudly nominated by AEIOU, not only have the Hutchies team been actively involved in our fundraising events, but they also partnered with us across Australia to bring eight of our ten centres to life.

Thank you for your continued support, Scott. We look forward to working with you on many more projects as we grow in years to come.



CENTRES BENEFIT FROM GENEROUS *support*

AEIOU is delighted to be working with some wonderful supporters from the trusts, grants and foundations community – ensuring the children in our care have access to the best resources possible!

- Gambling Community Benefit Fund - \$35,000 for additional shade sails and play equipment at our Logan centre
- Lord Mayors Charitable Trust - \$3,551 - Shade sails for Nathan centre
- Kedron Wavell Services Club - \$3,000 - iPads for Bray Park centre
- Toowoomba Regional Council - \$1,500 Sandpit refurbishment Toowoomba centre
- Courier Mail Children’s Fund - \$12,500 - Shade sails at Logan centre
- Neumann Benevolent Foundation - \$5,000 - Resources for Gold Coast centre

Thank you all for your support!



Joanne Stephen

WORKSHOPS FROM THE COMFORT OF HOME

In May, we proudly launched our webinar series, designed to provide an additional level of support to families. Complementing our monthly on-site workshops, the online sessions will conveniently allow parents to actively participate in learning valuable therapy skills and tools without the need to leave the house.

The webinars are run by AEIOU's senior program team. The first session was hosted by speech pathologist Joanne Stephen, covering the topic of “Communication: A two-way process”. During the interactive session, parents had the opportunity to send through their questions, which were then answered during a live Q&A after Joanne's presentation.

Speak WITH OUR NDIS TEAM TODAY

AEIOU is proud to have a dedicated team of NDIS Transition Support Coordinators to help map out your next steps so your family can receive the best outcome possible.

Our support service is **FREE** to all families who hope to enrol at AEIOU Foundation.

Phone **(07) 3320 7500** and ask for Katrina or Sean, or email **ndis@aeiou.org.au**



OUR SUPPORTERS

A grid of logos for various supporters, including:

- FREEDOM
- HUTCHINSON BUILDERS
- Sullivan Nicolaides PATHOLOGY
- BDO
- Alex Perry Hotel & Apartments
- ASCA
- CRAGGY RANGE
- Griffith UNIVERSITY
- The Bryan Foundation
- MIDDLEMOUNT COAL PTY LTD
- PITCHER PARTNERS ACCOUNTANTS AUDITORS & ADVISORS
- CF
- THE TRIFID
- APN OUTDOOR
- CHAIN REACTION
- MARGOT MCKINNEY A FAMILY TRADITION SINCE 1884
- Courier Mail children's fund
- Whitehouse FOUNDATION



“The strain of so many therapy sessions was taking a toll.”

THE CLARKE FAMILY

With an infectious smile and cheeky nature, Ryan could bring out the child in all of us. Zipping around on the bikes at AEIOU while Dad chases after him, he hasn't a worry in the world. His favourite hobby is building railway tracks and playing with trains, something his parents feel might just turn into a career one day. It's a picturesque view from the outside looking in, but the journey to AEIOU for the Clarke family was anything but easy.

Ryan and his sister Sarah were always active right from the beginning, however even from a very early age Ryan seemed particularly 'full on'. As a family, this led to us feeling very stretched and struggling to keep up. We have limited family around for extra support so life was very busy without many opportunities to stop and catch our breath.

We had already started some treatment for Ryan with occupational and speech therapists prior to seeking a diagnosis, but this did not provide the level of support needed. It was in fact these professionals who indicated some potential issues and said it could be autism. Since we did not have any experience beforehand about ASD we were somewhat guided by their advice. We soon realised how drawn out the process of seeking a specialist

can be and even after the initial diagnosis process started, we were trying to make the most of life, but struggling day-to-day. After reviews, meetings and appointments, we were in a way relieved when the autism diagnosis came in January 2018, as we now knew what we were dealing with. However, it was a sad time as well, as we began to fear the worst initially, and then became confused by the many avenues for treatment.

By this time Ryan was seeing various therapists and we were lucky enough to get into the Early Childhood Development Program (ECDP), which was a real start for Ryan. The program there showed that intensive therapy looked like the best option and so began the road to AEIOU.

While we waited for a vacancy with AEIOU, we continued our mix of therapies, however the strain of so many appointments was taking a toll. Fortunately, Ryan was able to join the first cohort to start at the Logan facility when it opened in August 2018. He took to the setting straight away and there has never been a time when he did not want to go. Even now, he knows to get into the car and gets ready to go to the centre. This has been a huge relief to us to know that he has found a place that he can be comfortable in.

Ryan has quite quickly moved up to the next room and is able to play more with others, developing some friendships and speaking their names at home. He has also been toilet trained which has been a great help. His speech is coming along, and he's been saying more words and recently taken a greater interest in books. His behaviour and ability to follow instructions are the next big steps which we are working on together with staff.

Ryan watches as his sister gets ready for school every day and we are starting to prepare for his transition later in the year. It is amazing for us to think that he will be able to go to a mainstream school, speak and play with other kids and develop to his full potential. We feel his aptitude for building train tracks and pushing his toy trains along could lead to him being either an engineer or train driver!

By Glenn & Ann-Louise Clarke



Some words of wisdom from Glenn & Ann-Louise:

Keep trying and believing! Even little improvements can make life that little bit easier and the staff at AEIOU are very caring and will try their best for you. We have been very happy with the commitment and professionalism at AEIOU, and they certainly make a positive difference.