COLLEGE NEWS

Autumn Edition 2025

Creating a brighter future



STEPS Pathways College welcomes new Boarding students

A new chapter has begun at STEPS Pathways College as we welcome our latest cohort of Boarding College students!

Over the next two years, these young adults will embark on an exciting journey, developing the skills they need for independent living while forming lifelong connections along the way.

Settling into a new environment can be daunting, but our newest students – Lily, Skye, Blade, Kloe and Lauren – are already embracing the challenges. From cooking meals and managing daily routines to navigating public transport and budgeting, they're immersing themselves in our Boarding curriculum's hands-on learning approach.

Lauren says she enjoys interacting with all the different people and looks forward to learning to live independently. Lily loves how patient the Trainers are, while Skye's favourite part of Boarding College life is going out for Saturday activities. Blade is focused on developing the skills he needs to move out with his friends, and Kloe is working towards getting an office job.

Beyond the practical skills, STEPS Pathways College is about growth, resilience, and self-discovery. Over the next two years, the students will develop their independence, a sense of belonging and pride in their achievements.

The STEPS Pathways College team is excited to support Lily, Skye, Blade, Kloe and Lauren as they take this important step toward their futures. We can't wait to see what they all accomplish!

STEPS PATHWAYS COLLEGE

07 5458 3000
customercare@stepsgroup.com.au
stepspathways.com.au



Stephanie

Principal's message

Welcome to another edition of our STEPS Pathways College newsletter! As we mark the beginning of a new term and welcome new students, I am thrilled to share the incredible experiences, achievements, and growth happening within our College.

As you saw in our cover story, we're welcoming our newest cohort of Boarding College students. Over the next two years, these young adults will develop their independent living skills while forming strong friendships and embracing new challenges. We are very excited to support them on their individual journeys.

Our students have continued to engage in hands-on learning experiences, including our most recent Charity Connect Lunch and a surf life saving excursion to Dicky Beach.

A story that recently inspired me comes from our Day College student Jax. His journey is a testament to the impact of patience, encouragement, and finding the right tools to empower our students.

In this issue, you'll also meet Trainer Kelly Purssell, whose passion for supporting students in their independent learning absolutely shines through, and Boarding College student Maddy, who shares her experiences, goals, and advice for new and future students. As always, thank you for being part of our vibrant and supportive community.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you would like to learn more about our College, have any questions or would like us to take you on a tour of our beautiful campus.

Stephanie Patey
Executive Principal and CEO
STEPS Pathways College and STEPS Social Business

How you can help

The generosity of our community helps make STEPS Pathways College possible.

Your donation has the power to change a student's life for the better, giving them the skills they need for independence, empowerment, and connection.

With your help, we can continue to build a brighter future for young people living with a disability and autism.

Thank you!





Jason Van der Walt
Director - Ion Smart Business Solutions

Thank you to ion

Ion Smart Business Solutions are long-term supporters of STEPS Pathways College, promoting our unique program to locals and backing an incredible cause.

As valued partners, they have been instrumental in helping STEPS change the lives of young people living with a disability.

Ion is one of our sponsors for the STEPS Grand Winter Ball, our biggest fundraising night of the year. Director Jason Van der Walt said he was proud to be part of the STEPS community.

"STEPS has great leadership and great vision which starts all the way up with Carmel and flows throughout the whole organisation. We couldn't be happier with the charity we've chosen to support," he said.

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Ion for their generous and ongoing support!





Curriculum news

Students host Charity Connect Lunch

At STEPS Pathways College, our students put their skills into action through hands-on experiences – like our Charity Connect Lunches. Hosted regularly at our Caloundra site, these lunches allow our students to showcase their culinary and hospitality skills that they've developed through our curriculum.

With guidance from their Trainers and our amazing volunteers, the students take charge of the lunches, brainstorming a delicious two-course menu, preparing the food in our training kitchen, and serving their creations to paying customers on the lawn outside of Café on George.

In February, the students hosted their latest Charity Connect Lunch, where they served chicken korma for the main meal and mango and coconut slices for dessert.

The Charity Connect Lunches are about fostering community and giving back. The event brings STEPS team members and students together in a welcoming space to enjoy great food and meaningful connections.

It's a fantastic way for our students to practice real-world skills, from teamwork and problem-solving to customer service and event planning. Plus, all proceeds go directly back to STEPS Pathways College, further supporting our current and future students on their journeys to independence and empowerment.

Each Charity Connect Lunch is a proud moment for our students as they gain confidence, develop essential life skills, and see firsthand the positive impact of their efforts.

Thank you to everyone who supports this event, enjoys the students' cooking and empowers them in developing their skills!

Students dive into surf safety lessons

Recently, our Boarding College students took part in a hands-on Surf Life Saving excursion to the nearby Dicky Beach, learning essential beach safety knowledge and swimming skills.

The lessons began with an informative surf awareness session at STEPS Pathways College, where students learned how to stay safe at the beach, identify different safety flags and rips, and understand the role of lifesaving equipment.

Armed with this knowledge, the students then headed to Dicky Beach to put their learning into practice.

Over two action-packed sessions, students engaged in a range of activities designed to improve their safety and skills in the water. They practiced safe entries and exits, learning how to navigate waves with dolphin dives, and had the opportunity to use bodyboards.

They also explored key rescue techniques, including tube and bodyboard rescues, and reinforced their understanding of sun safety – an important part of any day in sunny Queensland.

Thanks to the incredible support of QLD Surf Life Saving, our students not only learned vital water safety skills but also gained confidence in a beach environment. Their enthusiasm and engagement were truly inspiring!

A huge thank you to our Trainers and the Surf Lifesavers at Dicky Beach for providing this invaluable experience. These skills will stay with our students for life, helping them stay safe and enjoy the beach with confidence.





Jax finds his voice

Every student's journey is unique, and for Day College student Jax, the past few weeks have been nothing short of transformative.

When Jax first joined STEPS Pathways College, he was quiet and hesitant to engage, keeping to himself and avoiding conversation. His parents had downloaded a communication app on his iPad, but Jax was reluctant to use it out of fear of feeling different from his classmates.

Determined to support him, Student Support Officer Jen Stewart and Classroom Trainer Craig Bardsley worked closely with Jax and his family to help him feel more comfortable. They customised his iPad's communication app to include his own words and personal photos, making it feel more natural and familiar to him. Slowly but surely, Jax began to open up.

Then, in a breakthrough moment, Jax entered the classroom with a bright smile. When asked to share a story, he eagerly grabbed his iPad, pressed "motorbike," and proudly told the class about fixing his brother's bike. His classmates were full of questions, and Jax – using both his iPad and his own voice – answered them with growing confidence.

Since that day, Jax has continued to share more about himself, using his iPad daily to communicate without prompting. His confidence is soaring, and his willingness to communicate and participate has transformed his experience at STEPS Pathways College.

A massive shoutout to Jen and Craig for helping Jax find his voice and embrace the power of communication. We are looking forward to hearing more about Jax as his journey at STEPS Pathways College continues.



From left
Jax and his brother

Make a difference. Become a volunteer.

Volunteers are an integral part of STEPS – and we want your help to deliver life-changing opportunities to our students.

Whether your skills lie in the kitchen, classroom, garden or beyond, we have a role that suits your unique experience and interests.

If you are unable to commit to a regular volunteering role, we have opportunities for one-time positions at our many community events.

For more information, contact our Volunteer Relationship Coordinator, Karla.

07 5458 3002 or volunteer@stepsgroup.com.au



Trainer profile

What do you teach at STEPS Pathways College?

I teach independent living skills to the young adults that live at our Boarding College. Twice a week, a group of students and I work on understanding a range of everyday skills. Three days a week, we work on applying that knowledge in real-world activities

What do your students teach you?

The students teach me so much every day. I love that they inspire me to push myself to give things a go, especially the hard stuff that life brings us.

What do you enjoy teaching your students?

I enjoy teaching the students how to deal with the ups and downs that life brings and helping them become more independent. We also get to explore ways to keep ourselves calm so we can stay on track with our tasks, which I really enjoy doing – you see a lot of positive moments for the students every single day.

What is the most valuable thing that you have learnt in your role?

Never take anything for granted. Most people just get up, get ready and go through the motions of their day, waiting for something new to happen or passing the time until their next break. This role has taught me – and reminds me every day – to make the most of everything life gives you.

What has been a highlight for you so far?

It's hard to pick just one highlight – I just love STEPS Pathways College and what it stands for. Every day, there's something new to learn. There are so many hands and hearts that make this place run, and I find that very motivating and exciting to be part of.

Kelly Purssell

Trainer

STEPS Pathways College



Kelly

Student profile



Maddy

Tell us about yourself...

What hobbies or activities do you enjoy?

I love to dance at home and play games. I also really enjoy stacking the dishwasher – it's my job to do at home.

What classes do you enjoy taking at STEPS Pathways College?

Cooking classes, because we get to learn a lot of yummy recipes and eat them for lunch. Fitness class is really fun too, especially when I get to dance.

What do you enjoy about Boarding College life?

I've made a lot of new friends here! Plus, I get to visit the Café and try new foods. It's fun to hang out there with my friends and talk about our classes.

What are some valuable life skills you have learnt so far during your time at STEPS?

I've learned how to understand my feelings better and help myself feel comfortable. Sometimes I miss my old school and old friends, but when I feel that way, I can talk to my Trainers and friends about it.

Who is someone you look up to?

My whole family! I have a really big family, and I love to talk to my cousins. My granddad teaches us about helping people whenever we can. We go to work or school and do the best we can, just like he says.

What are your goals for future?

I really enjoy learning about looking after cats, and I have two dogs at home, so working with animals is something I want to do for a long time.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to attend STEPS Pathways College?

I think you should talk to people and start making new friends. It sounds hard but it's actually super easy, since everyone feels the same when they first come here. Everyone I've met here is very friendly, especially the Trainers.

Enrolments are open for STEPS Pathways College for 2025/2026

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Boarding College students shine at Cupids Masquerade Ball

On Friday 15 February, our Boarding College students attended the Cupids Masquerade Ball at Altitude Nine in Maroochydore, organised by The Rangebow Festival.

The Valentine's Day event was created for adults with disabilities and brought together both past and present students, along with some new faces, for an evening filled with laughter, dancing and connection.

The night was a chance for our students to put their social and communication skills into practice in a real-world setting. With a special visit from event organisers Dan and Jacqui beforehand, excitement for the Ball had been building for weeks.

Our Boarding College students have a 'Fancy Friday' tradition, and after being put to a vote by our Student Council, it was decided that the Cupids Masquerade Ball would be an official STEPS Pathways College activity to take the Valentine's Day Fancy Friday to a new level of glamour.

The night itself was one to remember. The students enjoyed delicious food, plenty of space to dance, and the joy of meeting new people for a fun night of socialisation.

For one particularly shy student, the evening became even more meaningful when she noticed a nervous peer standing alone. Without hesitation, she approached him and helped him join in the festivities, making sure he felt comfortable and included the rest of the night.

Our STEPS Pathways College Head of Curriculum and Training, Karen Caldwell, reflected on how important events likes these are for our students. "The opportunity to be involved in an event that provided the chance to meet new friends, share a laugh and have a dance – that's gold. We saw a real confidence boost afterwards," she said.

The next week in class, our students looked back on the night with a slideshow of photos. The Cupids Masquerade Ball was a magical night they won't soon forget.

Mark your calendar!

JUNE

STEPS Pathways College Open Day – Tuesday 10 June 2025

JULY

Grand Winter Ball – Saturday 26 July 2025



Visit our website for more information and to RSVP

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