COLLEGE NEWS

Summer Edition 2024/25

Creating a brighter future



STEPS Pathways College celebrates our 2024 Boarding Program Graduates!

After years of learning life-changing skills and gaining unforgettable experiences, five students from the STEPS Pathways College Boarding Program have officially graduated. Two students also received Postgraduate Awards and another student was the proud recipient of an Encouragement Award.

The graduation ceremony took place on Thursday 5 December at the Caloundra Power Boat Club. We saw STEPS Pathways College graduates, their families, STEPS Trainers and Support Officers, current students and community figures all gather to celebrate the end of an incredible journey to independence.

STEPS Managing Director Carmel Crouch said that while the STEPS Pathways College team will miss the graduating students dearly, this ceremony is the very point of the Boarding Program: getting young people living with a disability ready to live confidently on their own terms and achieve their goals.

"It's not hard to understand why this is my favourite day of the year," she said.

"To be able to stand in front of these amazing young people, who have worked incredibly hard to be where they are, is awe-inspiring. They've always been beautiful people, and they've put in the effort 24 hours a day at STEPS Pathways College to become independent and truly better versions of themselves."

Carmel Crouch and STEPS Pathways College Principal Stephanie Patey presented the students with their Certificate of Completion and proudly moved the tassel on their caps to signify their official graduation from the Boarding Program.

After beautiful and emotional speeches, videos and slideshows, our guests enjoyed a fun-filled afternoon tea overlooking the water. Our graduates excitedly talked to one another about their future plans, danced to their favourite tunes, and spent time with their proud families.

It was an incredible experience for everyone involved and the STEPS Pathways College team could not be prouder of our graduates.

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Stephanie

Principal's message

As we approach the end of another year, I am filled with immense pride reflecting on the remarkable journey we've undertaken at STEPS Pathways College during 2024. This year has been incredibly rewarding as I regularly witnessed our students seizing opportunities and reaching important milestones, all of which have contributed significantly to their growth as they work to achieve their dreams of independence.

This is a perfect time for reflection, especially after celebrating the outstanding achievements of our students at our annual graduation ceremony. Moments like these remind us why we dedicate ourselves to creating a brighter future for every single one of these amazing young people.

I've watched our graduating students mature, build their confidence, and expand their sense of independence during their time here and I'm in awe of the courage and commitment they brought to each day. What seems like such a long time at the beginning of the journey is so short in the grand scheme of things, and I believe our students have made unforgettable memories here.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the entire STEPS Pathways College team, our students, and their families for being part of this incredible journey.

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas and welcome the New Year, I wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season. I look forward to continuing our shared journey and achieving even more together in 2025.

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

How you can help

The generosity of our community makes 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!





Graeme Devin
General Manager - Caloundra RSL

Thanks to Caloundra RSL

Caloundra RSL and its General Manager Graeme Devin have had a long tradition of providing incredible support to our STEPS Pathways College.

Thanks to Graeme and his team at both the RSL and Sunshine Coast Function Centre, several of our graduates have been employed with jobs they love.

As the venue for our annual Grand Winter Ball for STEPS Pathways Charity, we are also hugely grateful for the amazing space provided and the incredible team of chefs and service assistants who make the event so special.

We would like to extend our deepest thanks to Caloundra RSL for partnering with us to provide employment opportunities and hold our iconic Grand Winter Ball.

Curriculum news

TSS visits our Boarding College



The Southport School (TSS) have hosted a three-day camp at their South Stradbroke Island facility for the last three years, inviting our Boarding College students along to share the experience.

This year Pathways College returned the favour, hosting three TSS staff and a group of Year 10 students for a week of volunteering with our amazing Boarding College students.

During their time on campus, the TSS students learnt about the responsibilities and benefits of volunteering. They spent time working with our students in the Café, Garden Centre and kitchen, and participated in our meal planning processes, supporting our students on their weekly shopping trip. There was also plenty of fun and games, with TSS leading teambuilding sessions including archery, trust exercises, volleyball and camouflaged hide and seek. Pathways College is committed to strengthening our relationship with TSS and this connection between the two schools is creating lasting memories for many students.



The Amazing Race: Caloundra Edition

In October, our Boarding and Day College students participated in their own Amazing Race. This activity was a culmination of some skills our students have been building: communication, using digital maps to find locations, and travelling using public transport.

To prepare, the students spent time learning about different locations around Caloundra and its surrounding suburbs. They also learnt how to pay for their bus fare, stay safe in our community and work as a team.

For the Amazing Race, the students worked in teams to strategise and negotiate which roles suited each person best.

The teams were given clues about local places and businesses and had to travel there using the resources and skills they'd learned. On arrival, they'd complete a task before receiving a clue for their next location.

The day was a huge success and will be a yearly event in our Pathways College calendar!

Jack celebrates his progress

Boarding Program student Jack has been making incredible progress, with his trainers and parents pointing out how much he has grown since enrolling.

Jack, who in the past has struggled with communication skills and making connections with others, has been making a strong effort to talk with his trainers and fellow students.

Michael Duffield, Team Leader for STEPS Pathways College's Boarding Program, said that Jack has been going out of his way to say goodnight to everyone in the recreation room, as well as writing down the names of the people he meets to better remember them.

"I think the supportive environment of STEPS Pathways College has given Jack the confidence and security he needs to put himself out there socially," Michael said.

"Everyone here has his back and encourages him on his journey to independence and self-empowerment. It's one of my favourite things about working here at STEPS Pathways College; seeing the students form strong bonds and support one another."



Jack recently took a major step in his independence journey, filling out an activity form to walk to Subway Caloundra on his own. He successfully bought himself lunch, ate it at the restaurant and walked back to the College.

His parents, Karyn and Ian, have been amazed by Jack's improved communication, saying they're over the moon about everything he's achieved in such a short time.

"I am so thankful for STEPS Pathways College and everything the team does for Jack," Karyn said.

"His confidence is growing and I can see him developing the sense of independence I've always dreamed for him. We are incredibly grateful and believe he's in the best possible environment. Ian and I couldn't be prouder of Jack."

To celebrate his progress, Karyn and Ian took Jack out to Grill'd for some lunch. STEPS Pathways Charity was part of Grill'd Kawana's Local Matters program, so Jack seized the opportunity to represent and support STEPS.



Elisha and Harmony share their story at Loud and Clear Conference

STEPS Pathways College Head of Curriculum and Training Karen Caldwell and students Elisha and Harmony gave a captivating presentation at the Loud and Clear QLD All Abilities Conference 2024.

Karen said that Elisha and Harmony did an incredible job, delivering their presentation with clarity and confidence.

“We were one of fourteen presentations at Loud and Clear this year, and I’m so proud of Harmony and Elisha for delivering a stand-out talk,” she said.

“Our presentation was about the ways we learn at STEPS Pathways College, striving for growth and self-confidence in every lesson and experience. Feedback from the Loud and Clear coordinator Leanne was that our words resonated very strongly with everyone in attendance”.

The two-day conference, which took place on Wednesday 9 October and Thursday 10 October, was created and hosted by Parent to Parent Association, an agency dedicated to inclusivity across different communities and industries.

The Loud and Clear Conference was created by people with intellectual disabilities for people of all abilities to inspire inclusive communities and self-advocacy. The event brings together people with disabilities, families, and carers in a safe and supportive environment that includes workshops and guest speakers.

Both Elisha and Harmony received certificates of appreciation from Loud and Clear QLD Coordinator Leanne Hollis, who said that their contributions to the conference helped to make the event a success.

“Elisha and Harmony’s insights and personal experiences have the power to encourage others to embrace their potential and pursue their goals, regardless of the challenges they face,” she said.

Karen said that STEPS Pathways College is honoured to have the opportunity to share their students’ journeys and success stories with the community.

“I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Leanne Hollis and her team for inviting us to Loud and Clear and giving Harmony and Elisha a platform to advocate for themselves and make their voices heard.”

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?

As a working chef for the last 35 years, I was employed to help the students understand the importance of a good diet and how to easily make nutritious food on a daily basis. I also help in the classroom to deliver the STEPS Pathways College curriculum, which is all directed towards life skills and becoming independent.

What do your students teach you?

The students have shown me the importance of enjoying yourself, letting loose and having fun. We all learn more and feel more engaged with life when we're happy.

What do you enjoy teaching your students?

Everything! Just spending the day with a group of students, sharing ideas and opinions, is wonderful. A lot of the time, I'm also learning new things, which feels incredibly special.

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

Making a difference in the lives of young people is the best way to spend your days.

What has been a highlight for you so far?

The TSS student visit was great. Seeing our students interact and participate in activities with the visiting students, even when it was outside of their comfort zone, was wonderful. This visit tied in with our social and communication skills unit that we're doing in class, so to see and help the students apply what they'd been learning was a special and proud moment. People here at STEPS that are helping students become independent. Watching almost non-verbal students flourish and hold conversations with me is a highlight along with the big goal of seeing students move out of STEPS Pathways College to live independently on their own.

Drew Simpson

Trainer

STEPS Pathways College



Drew

Student profile



Blade

Tell us about yourself...

What are the things you enjoy?

I love swimming and cooking things for myself and others. I also love talking to my friends – I think I'm getting a bit better at socialising.

What classes do you enjoy taking at STEPS Pathways College?

I love cooking class the most, but everything is fun with our trainers and my classmates. Everyone involved does their best to make everything enjoyable and engaging.

What do you look forward to about Boarding College life?

I look forward to being independent and forging my own path forward. Day College has been great but the Boarding College will give me new opportunities and experiences.

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

I've learnt how to manage conflict. In the past, I would avoid it at all costs, but now I know how to stop things from escalating or getting to a point where I'm too uncomfortable. Plus the cooking classes have taught me how to make things I couldn't before.

What are your goals for the future?

For now, I would like to focus on adjusting to the changes around me and handling those with confidence. I really look forward to Boarding College life, so my goal is to do everything I can to make that time successful.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to attend the college?

Find someone who you can hang out with! Making friends here has been easier than I expected, and it makes even challenging lessons or experiences more manageable. It's nice to be with someone who is going through all of the same stuff as you.

Enrolments are open for STEPS Pathways College for 2025/2026

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Students celebrate the festive season at Autism Treehouse Christmas Party 2024



On Sunday December 8, STEPS hosted our annual Autism Treehouse Christmas Party at the Kawana Sports Precinct.

From 9am to 2pm, our students enjoyed an inclusive community Christmas celebration, designed to be a safe space for young people with a disability and autism.

While the event was postponed due to poor weather, STEPS Managing Director Carmel Crouch said that the STEPS team was determined to deliver the event and give young people living with a disability the opportunity to celebrate in a safe space.

"It's our eleventh year of hosting the Autism Treehouse Christmas Party, and our team is dedicated to continuing this Christmas tradition," she said.

"The rain and postponement of the initial date did not dampen our spirits. In fact, it strengthened our resolve to provide local families with the event they deserve. The smiles on the children's faces, along with the Pathways College students, makes it worth it every single year."

We are incredibly thankful to the Pathways College students who came along, whether as volunteers or guests. It was a special day for everyone involved and we can't wait for next year! We're very proud of the STEPS Pathways College team for this wonderful achievement.







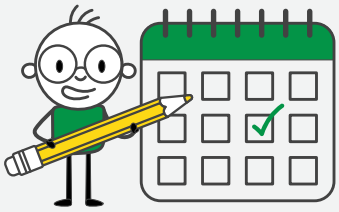
Mark your calendar!

MARCH

Tuesday 4 March 2025 - STEPS Pathways College Open Day
Saturday 22 March 2025 - STEPS Garden Centre Autumn Harvest Day

JULY

Saturday 26 July 2025 - Grand Winter Ball



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