

# eyeson autism

## AEIOU's first interstate centre opens in Adelaide!

Here at AEIOU we are on a mission to support as many children with autism as possible. We know there is demand for high quality, early intervention services. We experience first-hand how children benefit from attending our program. We believe in strong advocacy for children with autism. So, with your support, we make it happen ...

We are both proud and excited to have opened our first centre in Adelaide! The centre marks our first venture outside of Queensland and we hope it will be the first of many. Our Huntfield Heights centre also operates under the National Disability Insurance Scheme pilot program, providing us with valuable insight on the scheme and how best to assist our families now, and in preparation for the NDIS national implementation.



Our new Adelaide centre



Plans are also underway for our purpose-built facility in South Australia in partnership with Minda by 2017.

## We couldn't do it without you!

A massive and heartfelt thank you to all our supporters throughout 2014. Whether it's fundraising, sponsoring, giving your time, Taking a Hike, attending our events, or just spreading the word about what we do, your support makes a genuine difference in the lives of many.

- Thanks to you, many of our parents hear "Mummy" or "Daddy" from their child for the first time.
- Thanks to you, children like little Sophie (see page 11) can now give cuddles to their loved ones.
- Thanks to you, AEIOU children have brighter futures ahead – socially, emotionally and educationally.
- Thanks to you, our vision of supporting more and more children with autism across Australia is a step closer.

Thank you for all that you do. We simply couldn't do it without you.



AEIOU kids shine all year round

## Hyundai Help for Kids

Exciting news hot off the press is AEIOU Foundation's most recent partnership with the Hyundai Help for Kids Foundation. An initiative of The Hyundai Motor Group, Hyundai Help for Kids is the Australian arm of their expansive global corporate social responsibility program.

AEIOU has generously been granted \$10,000 per year plus vehicle support for fundraising events like Take a Hike. We are inspired by Hyundai's vision to "lend a hand where it is needed most" to children's programs, and we're excited about the future opportunities with this partnership.

Hyundai's support enables us to support more children with autism to reach their full potential. Thank you Hyundai!



# what's on

## Fast Five for Kids – Sunday 15 March 2015

Are you up for some good old friendly competition in the school yard? Revitalised from 'Paddle for Kids', keep your eye out in 2015 for the new, fun-packed 'Fast Five for Kids'. Register a champion relay team of four in the ultimate obstacle course. Four team members, five obstacles ... get competitive and win some fantastic prizes!

## Take a Hike Toowoomba – March 2015

Back again in the Garden City, Take a Hike Toowoomba is set down for March 2015 with big plans to raise vital funds while creating awareness of what we do at AEIOU. Stay tuned for further details.

## 10th Anniversary Gala Ball – Saturday 30 May 2015

At AEIOU we celebrate milestones and we will be celebrating AEIOU's 10th birthday next year with what is destined to be the Gala Event of the year! Brisbane's City Hall will roll out the red carpet, fine dining, exquisite wine and world class entertainment. So save the date for what is set to be a night to remember.



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# Season's greetings from our CEO

## Alan Smith – CEO

It's coming up to that special time of year again; Christmas. It's a time when we can relax with our loved ones and reflect on the year gone by; what we've achieved, what mattered, the wins, the challenges and the things we are grateful for. When I look back over this past year I am proud, inspired and truly amazed at all we have achieved to improve the lives of our children at AEIOU.

Firstly, we opened our newly constructed Gold Coast centre in term two, which was made possible with the generous support of the Gold Coast City Council and Chain Reaction. This centre with its purpose built classrooms, motor skills room, parent training room and meeting rooms, enables more children on the Gold Coast to be supported, to learn and to thrive.

Our Adelaide centre opened its doors to new families in October, too. This is a fantastic development for us as it marks our first interstate centre and moves us closer to achieving our vision of becoming a truly national provider for children with autism and their families. As South Australia is a pilot state for the National Disability Insurance Scheme our new centre in Huntfield Heights allows AEIOU the perfect opportunity to not only support children in SA, but to be at the forefront of the NDIS at the outset and to operate under its different funding structures. These lessons can then be applied when Queensland transitions to the NDIS. We are already gaining very valuable knowledge about how the NDIS operates and forming great relationships in Adelaide, with a remarkable response already from our parents at this centre. I look forward to sharing updates regarding our progress under the NDIS with you.

Buoyed by the success of our Adelaide centre, we are also currently exploring avenues for expansion into other states and to support more and more children with autism across Australia – watch this space!

Next year, AEIOU reaches its 10th year. Born from humble beginnings in 2005 AEIOU was founded when Dr James and Louise Morton were frustrated at the lack of adequate services for their young son Andrew who had been diagnosed with autism. Armed with medical backgrounds, the Morton's drive and determination saw AEIOU's first early intervention program open in Moorooka, Queensland. Today, almost 10 years later, we have 10 centres open across Queensland and now SA, and are well respected leaders in the field of early intervention.

In that time, we have supported many hundreds of children toward a better future. To ensure our service is as affordable as possible, and because every child with autism should have the right to reach their full potential, we raise \$10,000 per child per year. Our next challenge is to raise at least \$2 million a year so we can keep the doors open in all our centres and to assist our growth in supporting more children with autism across Australia.

AEIOU's work would not be possible without your support and on behalf of our children, their families and our team I sincerely thank you.

Alan Smith  
CEO



# AEIOU from birth 'til now

Louise and I started AEIOU because we saw a need. We saw a need because we were that need. At around age one our much loved middle son Andrew's behaviour changed. He would cry continuously and at times his behaviour escalated to severe head banging. He did not try to attempt baby talk and was largely silent. We knew something was wrong.

Andrew was diagnosed with autism at age 2. We were lucky, for many it is much later and we know the earlier a child with autism can access the necessary intervention, the better the outcomes. We wanted Andrew to play with his siblings, to enjoy outings to the park, to communicate with us. Like all parents, we wanted Andrew to fulfil his potential.

The difficulties and frustrations we experienced in finding a suitable program for Andrew led us on the path to starting AEIOU in 2005, with our first centre opening in Moorooka.

The first 5-6 years of AEIOU were focused on expansion of our centres utilising a lot of good will, passion and community spirit! We continue to have amazing support from the community. The last few years have given us the opportunity to consolidate our program, to review our curriculum, and manualise

our program to standardise delivery and reinforce outcomes.

Almost 10 years on, AEIOU is now both a provider of choice and an employer of choice. We continue to lobby actively and fervently to ensure families are able to access the best available support for their children, as affordably as possible.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank you - our supporters - as well as Queensland Government, the AEIOU Board, and especially Alan Smith, Diane Heaney and our amazing team of people who have grown AEIOU to become the success it is today.

Andrew is now 15. He can tell you every single character of The Simpsons and name pretty much every 80s song. He likes hotdogs and McDonalds and dislikes anything 'for girls'! He's cheeky and funny, and Louise and I are so grateful for the journey we have shared with him and how it led us to create AEIOU to help other families like us.

I'm excited about what's next for AEIOU: to further expanding our reach and to welcoming many more children and parents into the AEIOU family and toward a brighter future.

**Dr James Morton, Founder and Chairman of AEIOU Foundation**

The Morton Family



## Lights, camera, action ...

We are exceptionally proud of our Ambassadors who are all leaders in their fields, as well as legends to us at AEIOU! Our Ambassadors are international fashion designer and icon Alex Perry, 4BC radio presenter Ian Skippen, Brisbane Broncos co-Captain Corey Parker and V8 Supercar driver Lee Holdsworth.

We recently completed a suite of television commercials showcasing each of our Ambassadors and their messages of support for AEIOU and the work we undertake. Our thanks goes out to each of these amazing leaders for their commitment to make a difference to the lives of children with autism.

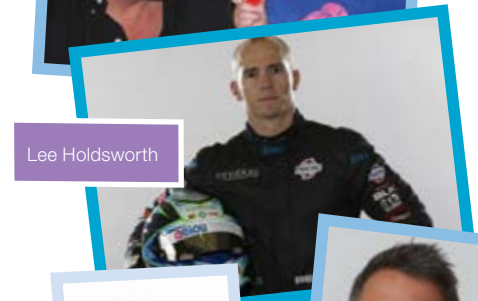
You can watch these commercials and learn about our ambassadors on our website at: <http://aeiou.org.au/our-ambassadors>

You can also view our new video designed to create awareness of AEIOU Foundation and our life-changing program. It's a short and uplifting video featuring our founder James Morton, AEIOU parents and children, and our long term major donor, Chain Reaction. The message in the video is clear; access to early intervention for children with autism should be a right, not a privilege, and should be available to all.

To watch the video in full, go to our website at [www.aeiou.org.au](http://www.aeiou.org.au)



Alex Perry



Lee Holdsworth



Ian Skippen



Corey Parker



# Take a Hike makes great strides!

Take a Hike is finished for another year, and what a successful year it was! The event is designed to challenge both physically and emotionally, giving the hikers an insight into the challenges children with autism face every day. People with autism are affected physically, emotionally, and not surprisingly financially. That's where Take a Hike comes in; the money raised through these events in 2014 go directly to helping hundreds of children access AEIOU's life-changing program.

There were two new towns introduced to the Take a Hike tour this year with the inclusion of Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast. Both regions enjoyed great weather and received support from the local community who got behind the events. Wide Bay raised \$15,000 while the Sunshine Coast raised \$19,789; very impressive and a great effort for these smaller regions in their first year. The funds will go directly to helping AEIOU children in those centres.

In March, the Take a Hike tour went inland to the regional town of Toowoomba with funds raised supporting AEIOU's Toowoomba Centre. In its 4th year, the Toowoomba hike was set a challenging target but not only reached their fundraising goal they beat it by \$6,000 raising a total of \$81,000. A total of 120 hikers committed themselves to tackle the 40km challenge and in doing so made a real difference to the lives of eight children with autism.

The next leg of the hike, on Sunday 22 June 2014, went east and to the beautiful beaches of the Gold Coast. The hikers took to the streets and walkways of the Gold Coast for the 3rd annual Take a Hike. With 37 hikers tackling the challenge, together the team raised \$20,000 for the local centre.

From there, the hike went as north as it goes stopping off in sunny Townsville on Sunday 10 August. The Townsville crew put on a great show of support with 88 taking a hike to help provide children with autism the best opportunities in life. Together, they raised a total of \$31,600 for AEIOU's Townsville Centre children.

The last leg of the whirlwind tour was in Brisbane with a picturesque course following the Brisbane River. The hikers were treated to a picture perfect day; blue skies, light winds and a sparkling river under the warm sun keeping the spirits high and smiles lasting all day long.

The group of 140 was made up of AEIOU parents and friends, business leaders, Board members, AEIOU Chairman James Morton and AEIOU CEO Alan Smith, all conquering the 40km challenge. The emotion-filled day and the accomplishments of the hikers will directly help children with autism for generations to come.

AEIOU is excited to add another Take a Hike in 2015 in Adelaide, which will support our first interstate centre. We are planning for a successful hike in South Australia so keep an eye on the website for more information.

Thank you to each of the generous people who kindly donated to the children, thank you to the volunteers and the hikers who gave up their time to be involved with the 40km challenge. A great deal of preparation is required by the hikers to ensure they are physically ready for the hike. We are thankful to those who made the commitment.

To our corporate sponsors, thank you, we couldn't do it without you: Synergy Accountants, Davco Farming, Hyundai Motor Company Australia, Toll Priority, Rotary Club South Brisbane, Rotary Club Bundaberg Sunrise and Rotary Club Hope Island.

To get involved with a Take a Hike in your local area, visit our website at [www.aeiou.org.au](http://www.aeiou.org.au)



### Did you know?

AEIOU fundraises \$10,000 for every child that attends our program.

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## IGA Golf Day

IGA recently held their annual golf day at the exclusive Palms Golf Course, Sanctuary Cove. With 100 of IGA's top owners, managers and suppliers together they raised over \$26,000 for AEIOU.

AEIOU will utilise these funds towards helping children learn vital skills, gain independence and positively change their lives. Special thanks to Terry Slaughter from IGA Springfield Lakes whose nephew is a past student of AEIOU Bray Park and helped make all this possible.

Further thanks to the volunteers from Paradise Point Bowls Club who went far and beyond to help create a successful golf day.

## Spotlight on research

AEIOU strongly supports ongoing research to further knowledge of autism. Our research team, led by Dr Jessica Paynter, has completed research this year including an investigation on the effectiveness of early intervention, and the use of evidence based practices in early intervention. The positive findings of these studies have informed the manualisation of AEIOU's program that will provide a framework for further developing the program and subsequent evaluation in 2015.

AEIOU is also a key funding partner of the Autism Cooperative Research Centre, the world's first national cooperative research effort focused on Autism, which takes a whole-of-life approach to Autism Spectrum Disorder. Dr Paynter and her team are currently collaborating on a number of projects in program 1 (early years) and program 2 (school) including longitudinal studies, subtyping, literacy, and studies into diagnostic practices that will all inform better services for children with ASD into the future at a broader level.



AEIOU's Head of Research,  
Dr Jessica Paynter



Having fun!

# Kids out and about!

Children at AEIOU love their community excursions. They're not only heaps of fun but they are great educational experiences too, with the kids able to try and see new things. Here's what we've been up to lately ...

Our Sippy Downs children went to Queensland Zoo and met kangaroos, lizards, koalas and lots of monkeys. They used their chatboards to construct sentences on what they could see, and even got a ride on the zoo train!

Our Hervey Bay children had a fun morning swinging from ropes, walking on balance beams and jumping on (and sometimes off!) trampolines at a PCYC Kinder-Gym class. The children embraced the challenges of conquering great heights and tricky manoeuvres followed by a picnic and playing games at the 'Train Park' on the Hervey Bay Esplanade.

The Bray Park children visited Scarborough Park for a picnic lunch with beautiful beachside views. Many of the children had their fathers join the day, and our team thought the Dads had just as much fun on the play equipment as the children! Everyone had a great time and the children were able to practice their gross motor skills and social skills in an adventurous and safe environment.

When Constable Sean visited our Camira centre the children got to try on a REAL policeman's hat, sit in a police van and some lucky ones got to hold the CB Radio. It was a great opportunity for the children to engage in a positive experience with a police officer and hopefully gain an understanding of a police officer's role in the community. Thank you to AEIOU Camira Speech Pathologist Lauren for lending us her husband, Sean, for the morning!



## A family story

# Jacob Williams and the evolution of Team Jacob

*The Williams family have three boys, twins Jake & Lachie, now 6, and Harry, 4. Jake and Lachie were born two months premature and were both developmentally delayed initially, however Lachie began to catch up to his peers while Jake continued to lag behind the milestones. Jake was diagnosed with autism at 4 ½ and spent a year at AEIOU's Nathan centre before transitioning to school with his twin brother. Here is their story ...*

When Jake was diagnosed with autism in October 2012 we were both relieved and sad, but not at all shocked.

Before Jake started at AEIOU part time in January 2013 he communicated through echolalia, and he was unable to answer yes/no questions correctly. He could recognise letters, numbers, colours and shapes but when asked wouldn't respond to questions in relation to his knowledge. He couldn't sit in a chair or one spot for more than a few minutes, sometimes only seconds, depending on his interest in the task at hand. He was quiet, passive and played in isolation.

Jake's gross motor skills also needed work; he was clumsy, fell over, tripped often, jumped around a lot (he still likes to jump around a lot now), flapped a bit, couldn't catch a ball and his running was awkward and unco-ordinated. Jake's upper body was also slightly low in tone and he tired easily. Jake's fine motor skills also needed work his grasp of cutlery and a pencil was very weak.

We'd tried to toilet train Jake when he was about 2 but he just didn't get it. We started trying again in the holidays before he started at AEIOU but it all really came together for him once he started at Nathan. He caught on very quickly with urinary toileting and was slower with the remainder but AEIOU gave us lots of support for tactics at home and within six months he was toilet trained. We had to find a motivation for Jake and for him to gain an understanding of reward. We found the iPad a good trigger for him and were able to use that as a reward for many learning tasks.

By the time Jake had completed twelve months at AEIOU the echolalia had all but disappeared, he was playing with others and communicating with speech in simple sentences. He had friends! He could write words, draw pictures, sit and attend for much longer periods and follow instructions with more than one step. He was even starting to challenge authority – a milestone, even though a bit annoying for us!

Jake transitioned to prep at a mainstream primary school at the start of 2014. He's had a really good first year with no transition problems. He and his twin brother help each other out a little bit but both have made their own friends, which is just fantastic. Jake's communication has improved out of sight, he follows all the same procedures as everyone else, listens and follows instructions. He receives some class-room support and an occupational therapist visits every Friday. He is working on being more independent and uses a sequencing board in the class-room to help him focus and attend to tasks.

We are so grateful to AEIOU for what they were able to do for Jake and also the amazing support given to the whole family. It was such a comfort to know he was getting the best possible intervention and helping us to give him the best life possible.

We're conscious this is an opportunity many people don't have. So last year Steve and some of his old University mates trained for Take-a-Hike Brisbane. Spurred on by this, they then organised the Team Jacob Boutique Beer Lunch. Sixty people attended and it was an amazing success. This year they had 100 attendees. We're really excited about what Team Jacob can become; from small and simple ideas greatness can be achieved.

We're not really sure how 'Team Jacob' will evolve yet but we know we're going to do our best to make it something really special. After all, our motivation is Jacob who will be with us the rest of our lives and we're constantly reminded how happy you can be as a parent when you witness things we often take for granted, yet represent amazing progress for an autistic child. If we can contribute in even the slightest way to other children also achieving these amazing things and bringing this level of happiness and joy to other parents, then we'll feel we have made a difference.

By Karen Hearle & Steve Williams



Today Jacob is happily settled at school



Team Jacob

### Did you know?

Autism affects four boys to every one girl, represented by the colours of AEIOU's logo.

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# Grants

Smiles all round at our centres! The Gambling Community Benefit Fund is Queensland's largest grants program distributing funding to not-for-profit community groups to enhance their capacity to provide services, activities and opportunities for Queensland communities.

Over the years, AEIOU has been fortunate to have the support of this fund to address the needs of our children in our program.

In the latest round of applications we were successful in the following centres:

Sippy Downs	\$6,695	Outdoor play equipment
Bundaberg	\$4,343	Play equipment
Hervey Bay	\$3,213	Play equipment
Bray Park	\$16,500	Upgrade playground and installation of slide
Camira	\$18,480	SunSmart shade sail for children's playground

The Bray Park Centre was the grateful recipient of a funding grant donated through the Queensland Gambling Benefit Fund in September. The money was spent on upgrading the existing playground with the installation of a new slide and play structure for the kids. Local Member of Parliament for Pine Rivers, Seath Holswich, officially opened the new playground at a morning tea hosted by Bray Park Centre Manager Brigitte. A number of Bray Park families attended the opening and were excited to see the new additions.

Our sincere thanks to the Gambling Community Benefit Fund who have and continue to support all our children in Queensland.



Seath Holswich MP officially opened the new playground at Bray Park pictured with the Centre Manager, Brigitte Pernusch, and the children enjoying the new playground.

### Did you know?

Autism affects 1 in 100 people in Australia.

# Fundraising snapshot

Here are just some of the great things that have been happening on the fundraising front this year:

The Aurizon Community Giving Fund program was established to provide relevant and sustainable support to communities in the areas of Health & Wellbeing, Community Safety, Environment and Education. Since 2011, they have helped almost 150 community groups around Australia to help others.

With thanks to Aurizon we purchased an interactive electronic whiteboard for the children in our Townsville centre. The centre serves the wider Townsville region as there is a lack of specific early intervention programs for children with autism. In some instances, our families travel in excess of 100kms per day to attend our centre.

The Rotary International Convention was held in Sydney in June this year and we were privileged to showcase our life-changing program for children with autism to more than 25,000 local and international Rotarians. We all know how service clubs assist local community and we were inundated with questions especially from international Rotarians who were impressed with our model and the results we deliver.

As a charity, AEIOU is involved with a lot of events throughout the year from our seven Take a Hike series to our numerous beneficiary events. For all of those to be successful, we engage volunteers to help ensure the events run as smoothly as possible on the day.

We sincerely thank each and every one of our volunteers for the help they provided to us in 2014. We have a huge 2015 planned and look forward to working with our committed volunteers across our upcoming events.



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# Cup Day glamour

The glitz, glamour and atmosphere of Flemington came to Brisbane's iconic City Hall for the inaugural Mercedes-Benz Brisbane Melbourne Cup Gala. Fashionistas and punters alike indulged in fine wine, exquisite food, elegant couture and the race that stops a nation all in support of the children at AEIOU Foundation.



Karen Catsoulis, Louise Morton and Anna McLennan



AEIOU Ambassador Lee Holdsworth with wife Alana



Ralph and Katrina Goldsworthy and family



## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



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# A family story

## Blake Gebert

*The Gebert family have had a huge year. They moved from their home-town in Victoria to Brisbane just so 5 year old Blake could attend AEIOU. Cody, 11 months older than Blake, started prep in Victoria and then moved at the end of 1st term to a new school in Brisbane. Dad Ben, finished his boilermaker qualification and realised a long-held dream to support his family working as a fly-in, fly-out worker in the gas pipeline industry. Blake's parents, April and Ben, made it all happen against the odds. Here is their story ...*

I had a gut instinct when Blake was as young as 16 months old that something wasn't right. When he was born he was fine but it was like all of a sudden he woke up one morning and he'd flipped a switch and he wasn't there anymore. There may have been gradual signs before but one day I just noticed so many things that weren't right.

I could walk up behind him and clap as loud as I could and he wouldn't even flinch. I thought it may have been his hearing but a test at 16 months showed his hearing was fine. Over the next few months I noticed he was toe walking and always peering out of the corner of his eye. He was waving his hands in front of his face a lot and couldn't or wouldn't make eye contact when we spoke to him. He just wouldn't look at us.

At the shops he would throw major tantrums, he used to just crack it and I never understood why. Everyone would be looking at us and we used to get really upset. When I started to suspect it was autism I took him to the GP and he agreed we should get him assessed. So after three multi-disciplinary sessions Blake was diagnosed with autism at age two.

We were able to access funding for fortnightly speech and occupational therapy which was great, but quite a distance away. We were doing as much as we could with Blake at home every day, then the therapy sessions got dropped back to monthly and our funding was really low.

The private therapies were costing us an arm and a leg and we just couldn't go any further with the work at home between his sessions. It was getting really, really hard; he needed more and we needed more guidance. We were stuck.

We were just getting really desperate at this stage we could see the window of time running out and against all the odds - as we were both unemployed at this point and had no financial back-up - we decided to make the move to Brisbane for Blake to go to AEIOU.

Eventually a place came up at the Nathan centre and we had three weeks to find a house and move to Brisbane, which was extremely challenging. We moved in April, a week before Blake started at AEIOU, and Ben started his FIFO job working 4 weeks on and 7 days off in the same week. Our careful planning resulted in Ben starting his job and Blake starting at AEIOU in the same week. Ben had done so many years of night school and day jobs while studying for his qualification and it all came together when we needed it to the most.

We've just seen massive changes in Blake since he started at AEIOU in April at 4 ½. His biggest issues were communication, speech and understanding, he had difficulty following instructions and his vocabulary was impaired. Now after six months at AEIOU his eye contact and attendance skills have improved and he independently acknowledges visitors. He can follow simple instructions and will now request things which he couldn't do at all before. His general understanding of things is so much better.

It just makes life so much easier. He's also a lot more independent with toileting, dressing, undressing, showering and brushing teeth. He also now says "I love you Mummy and Daddy", which is so rewarding. He is doing absolutely fantastically, we couldn't be happier. He's come an amazingly long way, but he's still got a long way to go.

It's a big load with Ben being away for 4 weeks at a time, but so much better that Blake is getting this intervention. We'd be lost without AEIOU.

If I could give other parents one piece of advice it would be: the most important thing is to follow your instinct, get second opinions and a diagnosis, and get intensive intervention as early as possible.

By April and Ben Gebert



Blake and his brother Cody

### Did you know?

About 70% of children who attend our full-time program go on to mainstream schooling.

Townsville centre manager, Leanne Gillman and her son Tom



## Book review - The Reason I Jump

Leanne Gillman, AEIOU Townsville Centre Manager and mother to a child with autism, shares why she loves the book, *The Reason I Jump*. This engaging book was written by a 13 year old Japanese boy, Naoki Higashida, using an alphabet grid and translated by an American author who also has a child with autism.

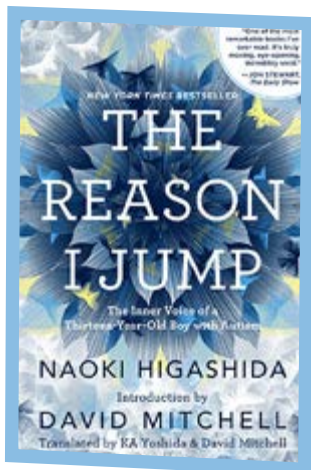
"The Reason I Jump is a question and answer style memoir that explains how this boy's mind thinks, feels, perceives, and responds in ways few of us can imagine.

The book consists of short chapters beginning with delicate questions like:

- 'Why do you speak in that peculiar way?'
- 'Why do you like spinning?'
- 'Why do you line up your toys and blocks?'
- 'Why don't you make eye contact when you're talking?'
- 'What's the reason you jump?'

Naoki's answer: "When I'm jumping, it's as if my feelings are going upward to the sky. The motion makes me want to change into a bird and fly off to some faraway place. But constrained by ourselves and by the people around us, all we can do is tweet-tweet, flap our wings and hop around in a cage."

Naoki shares his unique point of view, not only on autism, but life itself. I think it's a wonderful book to promote awareness and understanding of autism. As the mother of a boy with ASD I was fascinated. The book certainly had an impact on me and also helped me to better understand the children I work with every day here at the centre."



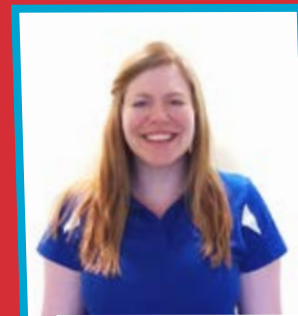
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## Meet Nicole Schaumloffel, Speech Pathologist ...

Nicole Schaumloffel, Speech Pathologist, is really excited to be working with the children at our new Adelaide centre. Nicole is a great advocate of the application of speech pathology for children with autism.

"As autism is so related to communication, you can overlay the teaching of speech and language with the teaching of human behaviours by breaking down the teaching of skills and using reinforcement."



Nicole is passionate about speech pathology

Nicole graduated from Flinders University, Adelaide in 2012 after student placements in special education and Honours Research into childcare workers' roles in children's language development. Most recently Nicole spent 14 months as a speech pathologist with Adelaide's Rocket ASD Services.

"I love the challenge and the unexpected outcomes that come from working with children with autism. My favourite part is being involved in early language development whether that's with PECS or words, seeing the children's interest sparked and their motivation to continue. I also enjoy the challenge of dealing with problem behaviours and helping children to come out the other side of that."

"I enjoy the AEIOU group setting and the opportunity to promote social development between the children, foster their peer relationships and social skills in addition to the one-on-one therapy with the children. I love working with the team and the kids at AEIOU."

## St Laurie's Walkathon

This year, AEIOU was again the beneficiary of St Laurie's annual 15km walkathon along the Brisbane River on Friday 8 August. The boys at St Laurie's raised an impressive \$10,000 which will go a long way to helping close the funding gap AEIOU experiences to deliver its life-changing program.

St Laurence's College and AEIOU Foundation have a long partnership strengthened over many years. But it doesn't stop there, the students at St Laurie's also donate their time and volunteer at AEIOU hosted events and functions.

AEIOU is truly thankful for St Laurie's help and support in 2014 and look forward to working together next year. AEIOU and St Laurie's will be celebrating together in 2015 with St Laurie's marking their 100th year and AEIOU marking our 10th year. Both are fantastic achievements and milestones to be proud of.



# A family story

## Sophie Warren

We were living in Singapore as ex-pats from Melbourne when our first child, Sophie, was 18 months old.

The first 18 months of Sophie's life had not been straight-forward. Sophie was not a great sleeper and would only cat-nap during the day and at night. Feeding and crawling had also been problematic.

When Sophie was 18 months our concerns with these initial difficulties were crystallised. Sophie still had not said her first word, had poor eye contact and didn't play with anybody else. She also played with her toys differently to their intended purpose and would only eat pureed foods rejecting solids every time we attempted them.

We suspected Sophie might have autism and tried for two years to get a diagnosis. However in Singapore health professionals take a 'wait and see' approach and are reluctant to diagnose until children are five years old. Educational options are limited to special school and children with autism are not encouraged to mix with mainstream children.

We knew from our own research that if Sophie did have autism, early intervention would be absolutely critical. I resigned from my job and spent time every day doing floor time, HANEN techniques and sensory activities. Paul was also eventually able to find another job which allowed him to be home more with Sophie.

While we tried to get a diagnosis we took Sophie privately to OTs and Speech Therapists. We felt Sophie was getting nowhere. In the course of a year, we'd spent close to AUD\$18,000 (there is no government funding for intervention in Singapore) and there was no improvement. We tried everything. Sophie had weekly therapy sessions but the therapists kept changing and so did their techniques. Most of the therapists were 'trailing spouses' who'd relocated for their partners work and would return home. This lack of consistency just led to Sophie shutting down during each session.

Throughout the various options we tried, there were many times where other parents warned their children not to play with Sophie in the park or times where Sophie

would not be invited to group playdates simply because she was different. Like any parent, this angered and saddened us at the same time.

We started finding out more about intervention for Sophie back in Australia as we realised the intensive early intervention we needed was just not available in Singapore. We decided our best option was to relocate to Queensland and try and get Sophie a place at AEIOU.

As soon as we had Sophie on the waiting list for a place at AEIOU we very quickly packed up our lives in Singapore and moved to Queensland to wait for a spot to open.

We arrived in April 2013 and Sophie was officially diagnosed by a paediatrician that May at 4 ½ years old.

I remember I cried when I heard the diagnosis officially. I knew this was the moment we were working towards but some tiny part of me didn't want it to be true. I guess I was relieved but also worried about her future.

Sophie began at Bray Park in early January 2014 at 5 years of age, giving her the opportunity of one year of intensive early intervention. We had a small window to get her help before she started prep and were not going to give up.

When Sophie started at AEIOU she had delayed speech, was speaking in two word phrases, her vocabulary was 50 to 80 words and only selective. She would not engage in conversation and was not even able to follow one step instructions. Sophie's eye contact was poor and she hated looking at anyone. She didn't like playing with anybody and would pick up her toys and move away if someone sat beside her to play. Her attention span was only about a minute and her focus poor.

She would have severe meltdowns with loud wailing, crying, screaming, holding her breath and throwing items whenever she couldn't get her own way.

Sophie (R) with her siblings



Now, after almost 10 months at AEIOU Sophie is constantly amazing us. She is so chatty! She approaches me for cuddles and communicates her needs and wants in a polite manner. She now is able to focus on her work for about 10 to 15 minutes before asking if she can leave the table. She says hello and goodbye to everybody she meets (sometimes with a gentle reminder from Mummy!).

I was asking her four year old brother what he wanted to be when he grew up and before he answered, Sophie said, "I want to be an astronaut princess, Mummy." Not bad for a little girl who had trouble stringing two words together at the start of the year! Sophie also now asks us to play with her when she wants to play dress ups or just a simple game of kicking the ball about.

At 18 months, we thought she would never be able to talk or be independent but look at her now! And all thanks to AEIOU. We had friends telling us we were crazy for moving continents just for Sophie's early intervention, but Sophie is living proof that early intervention is the key. The team at AEIOU have been nothing short of wonderful. Always listening and always giving us excellent advice to tackle issues with Sophie. Sophie has come such a long way because of all the hard work put in by AEIOU, our family and of course, Sophie herself.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

By Rina Devi & Paul Warren

# HELP US REVEAL THE CHILD WITHIN AUTISM.

The age for early intervention for children with autism is 2½ to 6 years. It's a terribly short window.

With more than 200 children enrolled every year, AEIOU Foundation's education and therapy support program gives children with autism the best chance for a brighter future.

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\$10,000 Child placement at AEIOU for 1 year  \$5,000 Interactive whiteboard for a centre

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Autism is not rare, it affects 1 in 100 children in Australia. There is no known cause and no cure, but research shows early intervention makes a big difference to a child's development.

AEIOU Foundation is one of Australia's leading providers of full-time early intervention for children diagnosed with autism, aged 2½ to 6 years.

Children with autism experience the world differently, and AEIOU's education and therapy support program gives these children the skills and tools for school, employment and beyond, changing the course of their lives.

Help us reveal the child with autism.

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