

## New leadership team as EPIC celebrates 30 years in 2020

As we enter our 30th year of assisting people with disability, EPIC is looking forward to 2020 and starting the decade with the fresh eyes of a new, experienced leadership team.

With the departure of CEO Bill Gamack after almost 7 years, we are excited to announce Dean Graham as our new Acting CEO, commencing late January.

Dean has been with EPIC for 16 years. He joined the organisation as an Employment Consultant in 2003 and has experience in management, counselling, vocational rehabilitation and disability employment across QLD, NSW, ACT, Victoria and Tasmania.

In his most recent role of General Manager, Dean oversaw all Australian operations of EPIC. It is because of his incredible passion and work ethic that Dean has developed a strong network and reputation within the disability sector.

"I am very proud to be given the opportunity to lead this organisation which has been a part of my life for 16 years. Working for EPIC is a privilege, as each day we come to work and have the ability to make a considerable difference in the lives of the people we serve," Dean said.

Stepping into the newly created Chief Operating Officer role is Rick Staveley. Rick has been with EPIC for 15 years and has progressed through the ranks from an Employment Consultant and Business Development Manager, to Marketing Manager and most recently Marketing and Communications Manager. Rick is also a recent graduate from our QUT Graduate Certificate in Business Leadership program.

Dean and Rick are joined by current Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Prem Nair to complete the executive team.



## Thank you Keith

In December we also farewelled Keith Martin who worked at EPIC for almost 24 years. Keith started at EPIC in February 1996 and is EPIC's longest serving employee. He was the first person at EPIC to have the job title Employment Consultant, and after a number of different roles, spent 7 years in the position of CEO from 2006 to 2013.

In his most recent role of General Manager for International Services, Keith managed EPIC's operations in Slovakia, Czech Republic and Scotland and split his time between the European and Australian offices. Thank you to Keith for 24 years of loyal service.

From left: Bill Gamack, Rick Staveley, Kimberley Ryan, Tony Bowden, Keith Martin, Marcus Bancroft, Grant Thomson and Dean Graham.



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### Welcome to the Autumn edition of EPIC Enquirer

In this edition you'll read about job seekers Michael and Simon, who rebuilt their confidence to the point that they were ready to obtain meaningful employment, and Paul from Yatala in QLD, who celebrated 40 years with his employer!

As EPIC celebrates 30 years in 2020, we look forward to continuing to assist more people with disability into meaningful employment.

EPIC Enquirer is distributed to connect and inspire more than 3,500 job seekers across Australia who are being supported by EPIC on their employment journey. If you would like to receive EPIC Enquirer in your letterbox you can subscribe at [bit.ly/EPICenquirer](http://bit.ly/EPICenquirer).

You can also connect with EPIC Assist through Facebook for more job seeker success stories.

To connect with your local EPIC Service Centre call 13 EPIC (13 3742) or email us on [hello@epicassist.org](mailto:hello@epicassist.org)  
[epicassist.org](http://epicassist.org)



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## CEO update by Dean Graham

As the new CEO of EPIC Assist I would like to welcome you to 2020. Whilst I am new to the chair, I am no stranger to EPIC or the disability community.

I started with EPIC in 2003 as an employment consultant and have since worked in various roles, most recently as General Manager, overseeing all Australian operations of EPIC.

I am very proud to be given the opportunity to lead this organisation which has been a part of my life for 16 years. It's an exciting time for the organisation, as we celebrate 30 years of assisting people with disability in May.

I'd also like to acknowledge the widespread devastation Australia has experienced due to the recent bushfires. The impact of these events will be felt long after the flames are out, and I urge anyone struggling to speak up and reach out. Beyond Blue offers information on how to look after yourself after a disaster, which I encourage you to check out on their website.

Working for EPIC is a privilege, and I look forward to continuing to make a considerable difference in the lives of the people we serve.

## Michael's confidence sky-high

When Michael first came to EPIC he had no confidence. He believed that he would never be able to find a job that suited his needs. EPIC helped Michael reshaped his viewpoint, focusing on what he can offer a company rather than what he couldn't.

"The support EPIC provided was amazing. They've helped me find employment, build my confidence and taught me skills to help manage my disability in the workplace," said Michael.

Michael successfully gained employment at Hog's Breath Café, Morayfield over a year ago and couldn't be happier. He is thriving in his role where he enjoys doing the dishes, setting up the restaurant, mopping and doing food prep.

"I love my work. Since starting my confidence has gone sky-high to the point where I can do anything myself and I don't need help."

One of the best parts of the job for Michael is being a part of a team that are all working together to support each other.

"My team is like family to me. My manager Sarah is like my work mum. I know I can count on Sarah and anyone from my team."

Michael is excited about his future working with Hog's Breath. He hopes to advance through the ranks and save up for his own place.



Michael with Hog's Breath Morayfield Manager Sarah Dixon



EPIC Ambassadors with EPIC Volunteer Coordinator, Mandy Brydon

## Make a difference in 2020

For many people, it can be difficult to articulate the reasons they volunteer their time, but the goal to make a difference is one that many of us share, and an incredibly important one at that too, explains Mandy Brydon, EPIC's Volunteer Coordinator.

"Volunteers bring a different perspective. They bring their own lived experiences that others can relate to, and in turn be inspired by. It can be a natural, personalised and nurturing way to make connections with others who may not have a support network around them," says Mandy.

When you volunteer you not only leave an impact on your own life, but also on the lives of those your volunteering touches and the community around them. Every act, no matter how big or small, has the power to make a difference.

To find out more about EPIC's volunteer program, get in touch by calling (07) 3857 5085 or emailing [volunteer@epicassist.org](mailto:volunteer@epicassist.org).

## Paul celebrates 40 years

A huge congratulations to EPIC participant Paul, who received an award to honour his 40 years of service at Uniline Australia in Yatala! Paul has held a number of roles over his time at Uniline, who produce blinds and other window furnishings.

Paul's commitment and loyalty to his work definitely doesn't go unnoticed. Well done Paul!



CEO Gilbert Da Silva congratulates Paul on his tremendous achievement

## Simon says choose EPIC!

Before landing his job, Simon was struggling to re-enter the work force due to his mature age and mental health condition. He'd had little success with other disability employment service providers and was hesitant to start a new journey with EPIC.

However, Simon was blown away by the level of care and support EPIC gave him. "They are extremely well organised, very friendly and they go out of their way to help you as much as they possibly can," says Simon.

EPIC was able to help Simon develop his resume, learn new computer skills, build his confidence and connect him with a mental health consultant. "All the support I have received from EPIC has been amazing, but most importantly they made me feel that my mental illness is not a barrier to employment." Simon has been working as a trolley collector in the Kallangur and Kippa-Ring area. He loves socialising with customers as well as the physical side of the role.

"I get a huge amount of satisfaction out of work. Every day I look forward to going to work. It has given me a whole new perspective on life. "I can't thank EPIC enough. If you have a disability or a mental health condition definitely give them a go."



Simon with Employment Consultant Belinda

## Partnerships create employment opportunities

In 2019, EPIC became a partner of the Food & Agribusiness Network (FAN). The FAN network represents the food and agribusiness industry within the greater Sunshine Coast region, helping members to connect, collaborate and grow.

11 people with disability were placed into roles as a result of the partnership, in addition to raising awareness about employing people with disability across the FAN members.

FAN shares EPIC's beliefs that every person has the right to work and we are proud to be continuing our partnership with FAN in 2020, to place more people with disability into meaningful employment.

In 2020, EPIC has started a new partnership with Moreton Bay Region Industry & Tourism (MBRIT).

This new partnership provides opportunities for EPIC to connect with employers in the Moreton Bay region, and spread awareness of the benefits of hiring people with disability. We look forward to meeting new employers and opening up employment opportunities for people with disability.



FAN members QCamel and Brouhaha know the benefits of hiring people with disability

# EPIC Events

## BRISBANE PARTICIPANTS MONTHLY DINNERS

Our dinners are a great way to connect with other job seekers and members of the EPIC community, relax and have some laughs over a casual meal.

Bring a friend or family member and join the fun. Please call the Support Hub office on (07) 3857 5085 to confirm your attendance.

Meals cost around \$15.  
Dinner starts at 5:30pm.

**Thursday 5 March**  
Aspley Leagues Club  
29 Kirby Road, Aspley

**Thursday 2 April**  
Norths Devils Leagues Club  
Cnr Franklin & Amelia streets,  
Nundah

**Thursday 7 May**  
Rashays Toombul  
Toombul Shopping Centre,  
Sandgate Road, Nundah



## DATES

**3 March**

World Hearing Day

**16-22 March**

Brain Awareness Week

**21 March**

Harmony Day  
World Down Syndrome Day

**26 March**

Purple Day for Epilepsy

**2 April**

World Autism Awareness Day -  
Go Blue For Autism

**May**

Mindful in May

**18-24 May**

National Volunteer Week

# Feedback from participants

“ The knowledge that the EPIC staff have was superior to any other provider that I've had in the past. Before meeting my Employment Consultant, I'd just about given up on life.

**David** ”

“ EPIC are extremely supportive in my life decisions and work choices for my future.

**Debra** ”

“ The assistance from my case manager was above and beyond with a level of understanding and compassion not comparable with any other DES provider I have experienced thus far. No question too difficult, for an honest yet realistic answer.

**Chelsea** ”

# Be limitless

We recently sat down with three members of the EPIC community to chat to them about disability, opportunity and the future. One theme that shone through was to forge your own path in life.



**Paul Larcombe**  
Business Owner

“You need to recognize that the greatest person in your corner right now is you. You are in the position you are right now based on the choices that have been made by you or for you. It's time you started making your own choices. It's time you started feeding your own mind and creating a future of your dreams, not others. Don't allow other people's perception of your future to become your reality.”



**Trish Jackson**  
Artist

“My question is what's normal? Everybody has challenges no matter how they look and what their body's like and I think the only disability really is somebody with a bad attitude. It doesn't matter how you look or who you are, you've just got to rise above the negativity and make the best of what you have.”



**Dinesh Palipana**  
Doctor

“Disability is really a social construct. What makes someone disabled? It's really just the barriers that society puts up. It's how you think about and approach things, and at the end of the day, you can't hold anyone else responsible for how your life's turned out. Disability is not really a limit, it's just how you choose to frame things in your head.

If you know someone who's future could benefit from connecting with the EPIC team, tell them to get in touch by calling 13 EPIC (13 3742) or emailing us on [hello@epicassist.org](mailto:hello@epicassist.org)