



Media Release

Saturday 25 June 2011

How APPropriate: New technology gives a voice to people who have difficulty communicating

Speech pathologists are finding new ways to help people with complex communication needs interact with the world around them.

iPhones and iPads running specifically designed applications mean people with little or no functional speech are able to 'talk' using easily accessible technology.

Presenting a snapshot of these new technologies and their uses at Speech Pathology Australia's '*Diversity & Development NT*' national conference this week, Jane Farrall believes this is just scratching the surface.

"The possible uses of these types of technology in clinical practice are endless – iPads and iPhones are already widely used to help people with autism communicate. Apple itself recognises this and included children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the launch of the iPad 2.

"The apps available offer vocabulary and pictures which allow the user to string together symbols to speak sentences or phrases, similar to traditional alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) devices," Ms Farrall said.

Ms Farrall said the quality and price of the apps varies greatly and consultation with a speech pathologist was essential to determine whether these new technologies were suitable for each person's individual needs.

"The proliferation of AAC and educational resources in App Store is overwhelming with no guarantee that every app will be good value or meet the person's needs.

"It's important to work with a speech pathologist to design a range of appropriate communication devices, of which an iPad and apps might be a part."

Ms Farrall will also present the case study of a 16 year old girl with complex communication needs and her experiences using new technology, its positives and negatives, as well as how it has increased her social interaction.

For more information on Speech Pathology Australia's National Conference, visit www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au.

<ends>





Media contact

To arrange an interview with Jane Farrall please contact:

Joanna Wood on: 0430 633 234 or marketing@speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

Rachael Nightingale on: (03) 9600 0006 / 0449 881 980 or rachael@fenton.com.au

About Speech Pathology Australia

Speech Pathology Australia is the national peak body for more than 4,500 members. The Association supports and regulates the ethical, clinical and professional standards of its members. The Association also lobbies and advocates for people with communication and swallowing difficulties.

Speech Pathology Australia's 2011 Conference

Local and international industry experts will examine topical issues at this year's conference.

The Conference theme is *Diversity & DevelopmeNT* and will showcase the innovative contributions of speech pathologists in advancing choices, knowledge and access. Held at the Darwin Convention Centre, the conference will run from 26-29 June 2011.

