



A winning formula

Group speech therapy meets growing demand

By **CASSANDRA DALGLEISH**
WIMMERA Health Care Group will trial a new speech therapy format to meet growing demand.

Chief speech pathologist Louise Mason said the demand for paediatric outpatient speech services had increased in the past year.

She said to combat this the health care group trialled a new format, with three group therapy sessions, at the end of last year.

“Wimmera Health Care Group provides the only community health outpatient speech pathology service to people living in Horsham and surrounding areas,” she said.

“Last year we had more than 1700 paediatric outpatient speech therapy appointments and numbers are continuing to grow.

“Historically, we have mainly offered individual therapy services for children, with some end-of-year school transition group sessions; however, last year we had a period where we were short-staffed, resulting in increased waiting times for assessment and therapy services.”

Ms Mason said the trials of the three groups would continue this year.

She said the groups were school readiness, phonemic awareness and early language.

Ms Mason said the trials were so far very successful.

“We received a great deal of positive feedback from parents with feedback such as: ‘My child benefited immensely and it was wonderful to meet with other children and families’; ‘The school readiness group helped

with my child’s confidence and was great preparation for next year’ and ‘After spending a couple of years in individual therapy, I found group therapy was beneficial to expand my sons’ social interaction skills when working in small groups’,” she said.

“With this positive feedback in mind and the phonemic, language and social skills gained by children who participated in the groups last year, we have decided to trial more group sessions in 2011, as well as continuing to offer individual therapy sessions.”

Ms Mason said parents and carers who were interested in further details on the trials could call her or their treating speech pathologist on 5381 9333 during office hours.



STORY TIME: Speech pathologist Courtney Seipolt uses story time to focus on colour recognition with children Jake Ellis and Ruby Spasic.