



Plain talk on speech difficulties

Katherine Sanchez had made it her mission to help those who struggle to communicate, writes **Daniel Hoy**

ONE of the challenges of completing a university degree is putting all the theory you have learned into practice.

That challenge is one that speech pathologist Katherine Sanchez has tackled head on.

After finishing a bachelor of speech pathology degree, with honours, at La Trobe University last year, Sanchez got a job as a speech pathologist at Sunshine Hospital, in Melbourne.

She works with young children who have complex needs, including difficulties with communication.

"My clients are outpatients, which means they are not actually staying at

the hospital," Sanchez says.

"I work with children and families on a one-to-one basis, in groups, or conjointly with other healthcare professionals to address their needs before they start school."

During her course, Sanchez's clinical placements enabled her to work with a variety of people, including elderly stroke victims, Aboriginal children in the Queensland Outback and babies who were having trouble feeding after heart surgery.

"My placements were the best part of my course," she says.

"It provided an amazing opportunity to learn about people, families, cultures, health care and the impact of

communication and feeding/swallowing disorders."

Sanchez also enjoyed the smaller class sizes at university which facilitated strong relationships with fellow classmates and teaching staff.

"The course gave me the specialist knowledge and experience I needed to hit the ground running when I started my first job," she says.

Sanchez advises people interested in this career to research the many areas in which speech pathologists can work.

"The Speech Pathology Australia website is a great starting point," she says.



SPEAKING OUT: Speech pathologist Katherine Sanchez works with a variety of people with communication difficulties.

TOP 5 TIPS

- 1** If you're still at school, make the most of your English classes. Good writing and speaking is very important to speech pathology.
- 2** Take advantage of all the resources you can to research what speech pathology is, and what a speech pathologist does.
- 3** Seek out some work experience in public hospitals, rehabilitation centres, community health centres or schools.
- 4** Get some experience with the sorts of people speech pathologists work with.
- 5** Keep an open mind. Many who were sure they wanted to work with children have ended up with adults, and vice versa.

Speech Pathology Australia at www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au