



Turning study into work



Job placements make you work ready, reports **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, with honours, at La Trobe University last year, Sanchez got a job as a speech pathologist at Sunshine Hospital.

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. It provided an amazing opportunity to learn about people, families, cultures, healthcare and the impact of communication and feeding/swallowing disorders," she says.

Sanchez also enjoyed the smaller class sizes at La Trobe, 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.

Speech pathology is an incredibly varied field, with opportunities to work with

patients of all ages from across a broad spectrum of life.

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 and, if you can, seek out work experience to get some hands-on knowledge," she says.

Sanchez, who wants to continue working with children, is considering further study for more opportunities.

"I know there are lots of opportunities to learn and develop, and I can't wait to take advantage of those opportunities," she says.

"There is now scope for speech pathologists to live and work in a developing country, which is something I'd love to do."

■ La Trobe will exhibit at the *Herald Sun* Melbourne Career Expo at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre, Southbank, 10am-3pm on Friday, July 29; 10am-4pm on Saturday, July 30; and 10am-4pm on Sunday, July 31.

More > careerexpo.com.au

Katherine's top 5 tips

IF YOU'RE still at school, make the most of your English classes. Good writing and speaking is very important to speech pathology.

TAKE advantage of all the resources you can to research what speech pathology is, and what a speech pathologist does.

SEEK out some work experience in public hospitals, rehabilitation centres, community health centres or schools.

LOOK at getting some experience with the sorts of populations with whom speech pathologists work.

IF YOU do decide to study speech pathology, keep an open mind. Many who were sure they wanted to work with children have ended up enjoying speech pathology work with adults, and vice versa.



Be prepared: Speech pathology graduate Katherine Sanchez