



South-west speech help ahead of rest

Expert says schools well served

By **ALEX MELLERT**

SOUTH-WEST children with language difficulties have better access to speech pathology and therapy than their city counterparts, according to a local health expert.

Speech pathologist and psychologist John Clegg said the south-west region offered a better network of support for children and families affected by language disabilities than Melbourne.

According to Mr Clegg, more schools and insufficient staff in Melbourne had led to a lack of speech pathologists in the public sector.

He said he knew of a speech pathologist in north-west Melbourne who was

responsible for 180 students just at one school.

“That’s outrageous,” Mr Clegg said.

In comparison Warrnambool had a very “manageable” number of schools and the co-operation between the Department of Education and

“They are the salt of the earth”
John Clegg

local schools was very good, Mr Clegg said.

He said the reason for the success in Warrnambool was the good education and co-operation of teachers and educational staff.

“They are the salt of the earth,” he said.

Mr Clegg has been working in Warrnambool as a speech pathologist for more than 25 years and said it was a “highly appreciated” profession.

After working as a speech pathologist in a hospital as well as in his private practice, he is now responsible for consulting with staff and people at public schools.

He said although the region’s supply was good, there would be “always room for improvement”, especially in the field of staff training.

“Unless you understand the problem it is hard to tailor a program for the student,” he said.

Staffing shortages in Melbourne have been identified as a major concern.