



# Project flags further support is needed

**More than half the 102 kindergarten children screened in the Central Goldfields need "further support" a groundbreaking speech and literacy project has found.**

Speech pathologists screened a total 102 preschool age children across nine early child care and kinder centres in the shire late last years.

It was the first time such an exercise had been conducted to glean hard data about whether the region's preschool age children have the speech and literacy skills they need to cope with life ahead.

The aim was to identify any oral language or literacy problems during the critical zero to eight-year-old development phase.

Last Thursday, 25 early childhood speech or education specialists met

at Maryborough's community hub as results of that screening exercise were presented.

The educators and speech service professionals were also there to help develop an action plan responding to the findings, said Rodger Brown, chairman of the shire's Best Start program which co-ordinated the exercise.

We may not all have what it takes to be ABC Classic FM radio presenters, but if Mr Brown's wish comes true all children of the Central Goldfields will grow up to be good communicators.

He said the screening exercise had identified 53 children as "needing support".

It had also shown that overall, 60 percent, or 90 children of those screened, would "benefit from further support".

"In total 148 children across the Central Goldfields were actually eligible to be screened," he said.

But 26 of those were already receiving intervention while 20 were not screened because parental or guardian approval could not be obtained.

"It was identified that some of those 20 not screened would also need assistance," Mr Brown said.

He said it was vital to identify any speech or literacy issues as early as possible and take action to address them.

The Best Start program will this year continue to screen all children across the shire in an effort to detect speech or literacy problems before the children start school.

"The earlier the better," Mr Brown said.



Speech and literacy experts and educators gather in Maryborough to act on findings of a groundbreaking childhood screening project conducted throughout Central Goldfields.

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