

Media Release

Monday 8 November 2010

For immediate release

Speech pathology advice essential in assisting students with disabilities and special needs

The Minister for School Education's call for advice on assistance for students with disability and special needs is an important step towards creating a level playing field for all Australian students, according to Speech Pathology Australia.

In a letter to Minister Garrett today, SPA National President Chris Stone applauded the creation of the working group and welcomed the opportunity to provide important professional insights to assist the large number of Australian students with speech, language and communication disabilities.

"Recent research has identified communication impairment as the second highest area of learning need in both primary and secondary schools – following close behind specific learning difficulties," Ms Stone said.

"13 per cent of Australian school students are classified as having a communication impairment, so it makes sense to include the professionals who help this large group of children in the consultation process.

"As the peak body for speech pathologists, we hope we are given the opportunity to contribute the experience and expertise of speech pathologists who work with these children everyday, forming practical strategies that will allow them to fully participate in the classroom."

Made up of education authorities, teacher unions, educators and disability groups, the working group is tasked with providing advice on immediate priorities and strategies to support school students with disability and special needs. Including other key support providers – like speech pathologists - would ensure a more comprehensive consultation process.

"If the government is serious about improving the educational outcomes of the increasing number of students with disability, those who assist students with these difficulties must be part of the team that create the solution," Ms Stone said.

"We welcome contact from Minister Garrett and the working group and look forward to making an important and valuable contribution to help children with disability get the most from their education."

Speech Pathology Australia is the peak body for speech pathologists and represents over 4,500 speech pathologists nationwide.

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