

Media Release

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For immediate release

Oscar winning film continues to inspire Australians who stutter

The awarding of the Best Picture Oscar to 'The King's Speech' confirms the positive and powerful message of the daily challenges faced by people who stutter and other communication difficulties, according to Speech Pathology Australia (SPA).

The film won four Oscars, including Best Original Screenplay, Best Director (Tom Hooper) and Best Actor in a Leading Role for Colin Firth's faithful and sympathetic portrayal of the impact of a communication difficulty.

SPA National President, Chris Stone, congratulated everyone involved with the film's production, including Speech Pathology Australia member and Lionel Logue expert, Dr Caroline Bowen, and said she is confident it will raise awareness of this communication disorder that affects over 200,000 Australians.

"It's wonderful to see stuttering portrayed in such a positive way and draw attention to the serious impact this type of disorder has on people's lives," Ms Stone said.

"Winning such a prestigious award like an Oscar shows the human side of communication difficulties and that they require life-long, and often intensive, management."

Ms Stone also welcomed the film's positive portrayal of stuttering and hoped it will encourage people who stutter and the people around them to be more open about the condition and inspire them to seek treatment.

"The stereotype of people who stutter having psychological or mental deficiency is unfair and damaging, so 'The King's Speech' will help people understand the true distress and anxiety felt by stutterers.

"I really hope that the film will make people stop and think about stuttering and perhaps even encourage them to raise what can be an embarrassing subject. If you know someone who stutters, ask them if they have seen the film or how they feel about stuttering."

Ms Stone also spoke about the long term effects stuttering can have, with recent studies investigating the social and emotional consequences of not receiving necessary treatment.

"'Speech twitches' are often just the tip of the iceberg of stuttering, whose cause is often neurologically based – which can result in feelings of anger, frustration and embarrassment. It is important that people who stutter know they can receive treatment from speech pathologists, who have the techniques and treatments they need to manage their stuttering."

"People don't realise that stuttering has a physical aspect, affecting motor coordination, as well as a psychological aspect – the anxiety, avoidance and distress. The great thing about The King's Speech is that it demonstrates this and points out that stuttering can occur in people of any background – king or commoner!

"Speech pathologists have developed very effective treatment methods and if you have any concerns for yourself, a family member or friend, a speech pathologist can make an assessment and discuss the treatment options that are open to you."

Whether a child, teenager or adult who stutters, it is never too late to seek assistance from a speech pathologist. To find a speech pathologists in your local area, visit www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au and use the 'Find a Speech Pathologist' tool.

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