

Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Essential speech pathology services now available for children with disability

Additional speech pathology services available under a new government scheme will give some of Australia's most disadvantaged children a much needed specialist early intervention service, according to Speech Pathology Australia.

SPA President Chris Stone said that the *Better Start for Children with Disability* initiative announced by the Labor Government today is a positive step for children's disability services and urges the opposition to adopt a similar scheme.

"We enthusiastically support an increase in services for children with complex communication needs and are pleased that many families will now be able to access the speech pathology services they desperately need," Ms Stone said.

"We look forward to working with government at all levels to ensure the success of this initiative and urge bipartisan support for the extension of the program to include children with less known or less 'visible' complex communication needs, like Severe Language Disorder."

"Early intervention is the best way to give children with complex communication needs the best start in life. By making essential speech pathology services available from such a young age, parents will now be able to access affordable and timely services that will make an enormous difference to their child's quality of and participation in life."

"Speech and language disorders have significant long-term impact and can result in literacy difficulties, poor educational outcomes, reduced employment prospects and the increased likelihood of social, emotional and mental health issues, with early intervention shown to be the best way to lessen this impact."

"The social and economic impact of communication and swallowing disorders in both children and adults could cost the Australian economy anywhere between \$13 and \$15 billion each year and an initiative like this could help reduce this little known cost to the community."

For more information on how speech pathologists provide essential services for children diagnosed with sight and hearing impairments, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome or fragile X syndrome covered under this scheme, visit www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au.

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