

## Media Release

Thursday 5 August 2010

### **‘Invisible’ disabilities deserve a voice: SPA Election Platform**

Health and disability policy has overlooked Australians of all ages living with ‘invisible’ disabilities, Speech Pathology Australia said today in releasing its 2010 Federal Election Platform.

SPA President Chris Stone welcomed the recently proposed funding increases for children with disability but strongly urged all candidates to remember Australians of all ages with equally serious but less recognised or ‘visible’ disabilities, such as severe language disorder, aphasia and swallowing difficulties.

“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. It goes virtually unnoticed because this group of people are unable to speak up for themselves – we cannot allow invisible disability to remain silent any longer,” Ms Stone said.

“Speech and language disorders may not be part of a recognised complex disability but can have the same impact: they can result in literacy difficulties, poor educational outcomes, reduced employment prospects and the increased likelihood of social, emotional and mental health issues.”

Speech Pathology Australia will propose a Productivity Commission Inquiry to determine the cost and prevalence of communication and swallowing disorders in Australia. They also call for mandated speech pathology services for pre-school and school aged children.

“Communication is a basic human right and all Australians – regardless of age, location, socioeconomic status and type of disability, deserve the same opportunities to participate in life and to ‘move forward’,” Ms Stone said.

Other election priorities identified by Speech Pathology Australia include:

- Continuing fundamental health reform incorporating allied health professions into these reforms
- Ensuring accessible and affordable speech pathology services as part of primary health care teams
- Incorporating speech pathology into early childhood development initiatives
- Committing to a National Disability Care and Support Scheme, inclusive of communication and swallowing disorders
- Including speech pathology in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme

SPA’s full 2010 Federal Election Platform is available at [www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au).

#ends#

Contact: Joanna Wood  
03 9642 4899 / 0430 633 234

Speech Pathology Australia Communications Officer  
marketing@speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

*SPA is the national peak body for the speech pathology profession in Australia and advocates on behalf of its members and all Australians living with communication and swallowing disorders.*

