



Aunty turns the page on disability

Speech Pathology Week highlights importance of improving skills in literacy

By **FALLON HUDSON**

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MAUREEN Sant wished to be able to read to her six-year-old nephew.

Miss Sant proved that an intellectual disability would not prevent her from achieving her personal life goals.

Since receiving the assistance of a speech pathologist and a resource officer from the Queensland Government, Miss Sant has taken part in a literacy program where her reading has flourished.

Taking part in the literacy program allowed Miss Sant to be involved in voluntary work at the Mackay City and Gordon White libraries.

Mackay speech and language pathologist Anne

Robinson said Maureen's story illustrated Speech Pathology Week's theme of Literacy for Life.

Ms Robinson said Maureen has been keen on books since expressing a wish to develop her adult literacy skills.

This week is Speech Pathology Week, which celebrates the speech pathology profession and the important role they play in acquiring and maintaining literacy skills.

Ms Robinson said almost 46% of Australians aged between 15 and 74 years do not have the literacy skills needed to meet the demands of everyday life.

"Poor literacy skills make it difficult to access an education, find a job and even take part in the community.

"During Speech Pathology Week, we want to encourage people who feel that perhaps their reading or writing skills aren't what they should be, to take the first step and contact someone who can help – like a speech pathologist.

"Speech pathologists have the specialised knowledge and experience needed to identify communication difficulties and to provide people with the help that they need to build critical language and literacy skills," she said.

Part of Miss Sant's job at the libraries is to sort and put books, magazines and DVDs in the designated sections of the library.

Ms Robinson said Miss Sant's indulgence in books has expanded her expres-

sive vocabulary and understanding of words and increased her knowledge of the world.

One of the hobbies that Miss Sant loves is to cook, with speciality being chicken curry and spaghetti bolognese. Miss Robinson said her literacy skills have helped her to read self-selected fiction and non-fiction books, recipes, calendars, signs in the community, labels of items in shops and menus at restaurants.

She said that speech pathologists play a vital role in the development of key speaking and listening skills, including awareness of sounds in words and language comprehension.



LITERACY FOR LIFE: Mackay speech and language pathologist Anne Robinson and Maureen Sant explore literacy during Speech Pathology Week at the Gordon White Library this week. PHOTO: PETER HOLT