



HEALTHY TIMES North Shore-Ryde Health Service general manager SUE SHILBURY

How to communicate

IMAGINE not being able to speak, buy a bus ticket or order a takeaway meal over the phone.

This is the reality for some North Shore residents, unable to communicate through speech in a way most of us take for granted.

To publicise their plight and the ways we can communicate with people other than speech, "Communicate to Participate" has been made the theme of Speech Pathology Week which ends tomorrow.

Royal North Shore Hospital speech pathologist Katy Fischer said people with communication difficulties often felt socially isolated and frustrated and may be self-conscious about speaking in public.

"If you feel you'll be misunderstood when you order a meal in a restaurant or buy cinema

tickets this is going to really restrict you from normal social interaction," she said.

"RNSH and Ryde speech pathology services aim to help people who have difficulty using or understanding speech and language to communicate effectively."

RNSH and Ryde speech pathology services helped about 2500 adults a year with communication difficulties by helping them develop other ways to communicate.

"The service employs methods such as hand and body gestures, the use of picture prompts, self-prompting techniques and electronic communication tools," Ms Fischer said.

"Augmentative and alternative communication is a term used by speech pathologists to describe the methods used to help those who have difficulty with

spoken or written language.

"These include any devices that supplement speech and writing, such as computers, electronic alphabet and picture boards, and instruments that display symbols.

"As technology improves so does the range of electronic communication tools available."

People could have difficulties communicating using speech for all sorts of reasons including head injuries as a result of a traffic accident or fall, or after a stroke.

"Some may know what they want to say but cannot get the words out through speech," Ms Fischer said.

More information is available on the Speech Pathology Australia website, see: www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au.