



Speech treatment funding package

By MICHAEL LOWE

A GAP in child speech pathology services is being tackled with a two-year funding package for disability service provider St Giles.

Launceston health professionals have been saying children with speech difficulties were suffering because of staff shortages at St Giles, the Launceston General Hospital and the Health Department's child development unit.

Professionals said the shortage was made worse by poor coordination between providers and some children were waiting months to see a speech pathologist.

But St Giles allied health general manager Catherine Merry said \$698,908 in new Federal Government funding meant two new speech pathologists and a psychologist could be employed for two years from July 1.

Ms Merry said the service, called The Vital Early Years, would offer speech help for children aged to four years.

She said the service would be based

at the Amy Rd office but also offer outreach talks to city community groups and visits as far away as George Town and St Helens.

Ms Merry said the staff would hopefully be recruited for the July 1 start.

She said St Giles had a core business of offering speech pathology and other help to children with multiple issues but this new service was aimed at children only with speech issues.

The psychologist would allow the service to help with both speech and behavioural problems.

"There is an identified gap in children with speech and language delays that will cause difficulties at school," she said.

"Your speech and language is really important for pre-literacy skills.

"We want to get across as many kids as we can."

Phone 6343 0218 for information about the service.