

Speech pathology

SPEECH Pathology Australia appreciates both Education Minister David Bartlett and Opposition Leader Will Hodgman acknowledging the shortage of speech pathologists in Tasmanian schools (*Mercury*, September 6).

We are concerned that these widespread shortages have a heavy impact on access to crucial services for at-risk Tasmanians of all ages who have communication and swallowing disorders. Without this professional assistance, individuals can suffer lifelong poor health, social and academic difficulties.

We see it as a long-term chal-

lenge to attract and retain speech pathologists in Tasmania. While it is encouraging to see the Education Department has a recruitment strategy, we call on the Government to take a more comprehensive view to resolving the shortage.

To begin this process, action needs to be taken to provide financial assistance (scholarships, relocation reimbursement) and training for students, new graduates and experienced practitioners. As part of a long-term solution, it is imperative that there be a speech pathology course in Tasmania.

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