

Letter to the Editor - WA Times, 20/03/09

Dear Editor,

We hope you will genuinely consider publishing the following Letter to the Editor, however we wish to also suggest that it would be highly beneficial to your readers, if we could provide a case study for you, highlighting what a speech pathologist actually does to assist someone with a communication or swallowing difficulty. I'm sure thousands of your readers will have themselves been impacted, or watched a family member who is living with these difficulties, and would appreciate they are not struggling alone and that there is a lot of information available to help.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

No bells of laughter

We were very disappointed to read the article, "Ask not for whom the stolen bell tolls", in *Inside Cover* and to see the accompanying cartoon, Friday 20 March.

As the peak body for speech pathologists, we represent a dynamic profession who are specialists working with all age groups who experience communication or swallowing disorders. We also advocate for our clients, who all too often have little representation or 'voice' in the community.

We understand that your column and accompanying cartoon are aimed to be humorous, but we can assure you that for those in the community who live with communication difficulties, their conditions are no laughing matter. And this story and cartoon also undermine the valuable work that speech pathologists undertake with their clients.

Those who suffer from articulation disorders (such as a lisp), difficulty in finding the right words to express themselves, or difficulty in processing and understanding language can find everyday situations frustrating and isolating.

Imagine the distress of parents trying to help their child learn to express themselves, seeing that their difficulties are misunderstood and laughed at. Or yourself suffering from a devastating stroke, to find that you can no longer even ask for something at a shop counter, read instructions on medication, or tell your family that you love them.

Cartoons such as yours are not helpful in educating the community about the real experiences these people endure, or the valuable speech pathology and allied health assistance [that](#) is available.

Effective communication is an essential part of participating in a community, and integral to what makes us all feel human and connected with each other.

Please consider the feelings of those who struggle with ignorance, prejudice and discrimination every day, before making them the butt of an [ill-informed](#) joke.

Gail Mulcair, CEO
Speech Pathology Australia