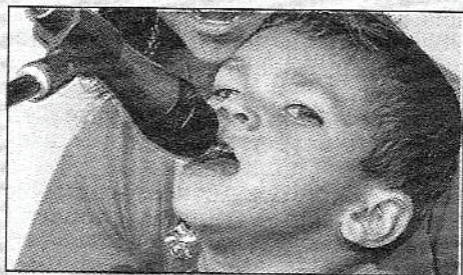


MY SAY



Kids miss out on speech therapy

By Cori Williams

WE well understand Alette Rennie's frustration at her child not receiving adequate speech pathology services ("Speechless with frustration", March 23).

The Victorian Education Department's 2006 change of criteria defining a "severe language disorder" has had a significant impact on funding help for students who need speech pathology services at school.

As the national peak body for speech pathologists, we are concerned that students requiring communication and language assistance, including speech pathology services and integration aides, are missing out on crucial help.

In 2005, 6760 children received services, but in 2006 this dropped to just 208 children.

For Alette Rennie's daughter, and for many other children with similar problems, this has major implications for her ability to participate fully at school.

It can also have lifelong learning, social and economic effects.

Reducing funding for speech therapy is short-sighted and likely to result in an increased economic burden in the long term.

Dr Cori Williams is national president, Speech Pathology Australia