



# Language is for life

DEVELOPING 'language for life' was the focus of Speech Pathology Week last week.

Moree speech pathologists hosted a morning tea for children last Monday as part of the week-long celebration of the profession and its vital role in supporting Australians with communication difficulties.

Difficulties in using and understanding language, voice, fluency, reading and writing are found in many children, and adults who have acquired brain injuries.

It has been estimated that one in seven Australians has a form of a communication disorder which can make simple daily activities frustrating and difficult.

Moree based speech pathologist Jodie Paul said it was important to educate parents on how to get the most out of language.

"That can include learning how to asking appropriate questions and books are very important," she said.

"Early intervention can prevent life-long difficulties."

Colleague Sandy Scotton said the New England Health Service has provided 'when to refer' pamphlets with information on speech disorders.

"Teachers, daycare workers or GPs may notice that a child has a problem or parents can refer themselves for an assessment," she said.



**SPEECH SPECIALISTS:** Jodie Paul, Kelly James and Sandy Scotton are speech pathologists who work for the Hunter New England Health Service.

"The main thing for children to realise is they are not alone, this is not a freakish thing."

The first assessment is a free service and can help to judge whether a child may need therapy at home or with speech therapists, or requires a school program.

Using colourful props and games, Moree speech pathologists help children overcome their speech and socialisation difficulties.

Their bright office, which is full of toys, welcomes children into every session.

"Children don't often cry when they arrive for therapy," Mrs Paul said.

"Sometimes they do cry when it's time to leave."

This year's Speech Pathology Week focused on the need to have children diagnosed early to prevent life-long problems.

Children and adults with communication difficulties may suffer mental health issues and behavioural problems, display poor self-esteem and can struggle to manage social relationships and sustain employment.