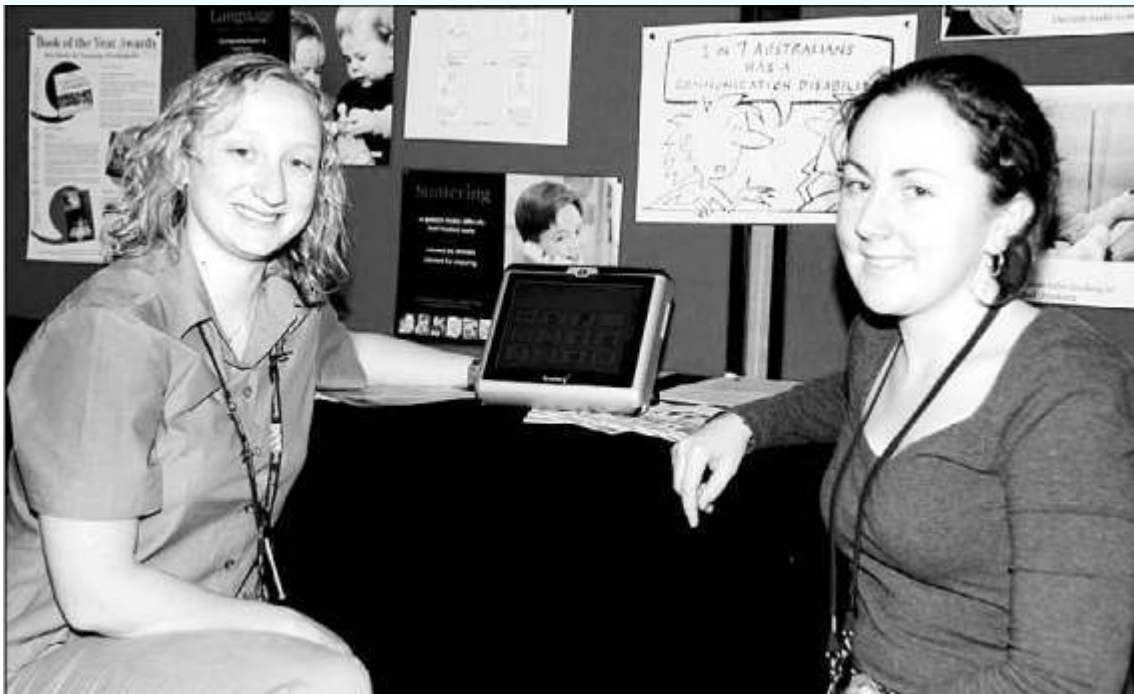




# Communicating: more than words



**ON DISPLAY . . .** speech pathologists Michelle Downes and Jessica Lamond arrange a display of information about speech pathology.

SPEECH pathologists in Charters Towers will raise awareness about their work with Australians who are unable to speak or have severe speech difficulties, as part of this year's Speech Pathology Week from August 24 to 30.

This year, Speech Pathology Week is themed, "Communication: More than just words," and will focus on the communication options available for people who have severe speech difficulties.

In order to promote this message, displays have been set up at the Excelsior Library and the Charters Towers Hospital.

Local speech pathologist Michelle Downes said it is crucial to give Australians with speech difficulties a voice to be able to share their needs, thoughts, opinions, ideas and emotions.

"People who have complex communication needs often have problems making themselves understood and understanding what is being said," she said.

"This can lead to social isolation and extreme frustration for many people."

Conditions that can lead to complex communication needs include cerebral palsy, autism, stroke, brain injury, intellectual disabilities and hearing impairment. The conditions vary in severity and duration.

Ms Downes said when speech is impaired augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) may be used to enhance or replace speech.

"Many people assume speech pathologists only assist with speech, but we also help people to communicate through picture boards, gestures, signing,

writing as well as computer programs and speech-generating devices."

Speech pathologists are specialists who work with people who have varying degrees of communication difficulties across all stages of the lifespan.

"Seeking early speech pathology advice for young children in particular who may have speech, language or stuttering difficulties may prevent social, literacy or learning difficulties at school," Ms Downes said.

Speech pathology services are available for all ages at the Charters Towers Hospital or for state school children through Education Queensland.

For more information visit: [www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au)