



Speech pathologists give Aussies a voice

STAWELL - Carrie Dunkley, speech pathologist at Stawell Regional Health, will raise awareness about her work with Australians who are unable to speak or have severe speech difficulties, as part of this year's Speech Pathology Week.

This year, Speech Pathology Week August 24-30 is themed, 'Communication: More than just words' and will focus on the communication options available for people who have severe speech difficulties.

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

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.

According to Carrie, when speech is impaired, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is 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," Carrie said.

"Speech pathologists work with individuals who have complex communication needs and the people around them, to find an AAC system which maximises their opportunities for communication."



Speech pathologist at Stawell Regional Health, Carrie Dunkley.

If you are concerned about a friend or family member who might have a complex communication need, encourage them to visit a speech pathologist or consult their local General Practitioner, who can provide a referral.

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

For more information call 5358 8507 and arrange an appointment with Carrie, a doctor's referral is not required.

About Speech Pathology Week:

Speech Pathology Week 2008 celebrates the profession and its members' work with people of all ages who have communication and swallowing difficulties. This year's theme is 'Communication: More than just words.'