



For Mildura's Brooke Gibbons, raising awareness about the study of disorders that affect a person's speech is all about.

Spreading the word

MILDURA'S Brooke Gibbons is typical of the 4200-strong team of people working across the nation for Speech Pathology Australia.

They work in hospitals, schools, community health centres, private practice and other agencies to provide a variety of services to people who suffer from communication and swallowing difficulties.

And next week is annual Speech Pathology Week, highlighting the profession and the

work of Speech Pathology Australia members with people of all ages, embracing the theme, 'Communication: More than just words'.

Brooke said that "Speech Pathologists work with individuals who have communication and swallowing difficulties during all stages of their life span, and our training and expertise can provide clients with an effective means of communicating."

• Continued Page 21



HELPING HAND: Brooke Gibbons examines Mildura's Max Wilkinson, one of her four laryngectomy clients.



Spreading the word

- From Page 12

According to Brooke "the general public recognises our work with speech delays/disorders, however they do not widely recognise that all aspects of communication fall under the umbrella of our profession". "For example, people widely associate the work of a Speech Pathologist with 'lisps' and 'stuttering', but do not often recognise our work with language and literacy". The incidence of communication difficulties in the general community (both adult and paediatric populations) is significant, which is understandable considering the breadth of diagnoses that can lead to communication difficulties.

Mildura's Max Wilkinson is one of four Laryngectomy clients Brooke is currently working with at the Mildura Base Hospital, and during a consultation period of approximately 10 months since undergoing a total Laryngectomy, significant improvements have been made. Max is now able to communicate more effec-

tively, enhancing his quality of life and interactions with his friends and family.

A Laryngectomy requires the removal of the larynx and separation of the airway from the mouth, nose and esophagus, with patients breathing through an opening in the neck, commonly known as a stoma. The Speech Pathologists role working with the Laryngectomee includes coordinating voice restoration options, determining and inserting an appropriate voice prosthesis and teaching the client and their family how to clean and care for the external stoma.

Readers expressing concern about a friend or family member who might have impaired communication are encouraged to contact a Speech Pathologist sooner rather than later, as therapy is free and no referral is required. Further details are available by contacting Mildura Base Hospital on 5022 3250, Sunraysia Community Health Service on 5022 5444 or visiting the web site www.speechpathology.org.au.