



Eden Imlay Magnet

Thursday 19/7/2007

Page: 50

Section: General News

Region: Eden NSW Circulation: 1,738

Type: Regional

Size: 130.28 sq.cms.

Published: ---T---

Brief: SPEECHWEEK

Speak up now

Swallowing is no choking matter, says local speech pathologist.

During Speech Pathology Week, from July 22 to 28, speech pathologists in the Bega Valley will highlight the profession's vital role in helping those in the local community with swallowing disorders [dysphagia].

"Every day we swallow food and drink without a second thought," said local speech pathologist Cathy Shorten.

"However, this crucial function can be a daily struggle for some Australians. The condition, called dysphagia, involves difficulty swallowing food, liquid and/or saliva.

"Dysphagia can affect people's quality of life and in severe cases, it can be life threatening."

Mrs Shorten said dysphagia affects Australians of all ages.

"It is estimated the condition affects up to 70 per cent of premature babies and 50 per cent of all stroke patients. In adults, dysphagia may result from a number of conditions including cancer, stroke or neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease."

"Symptoms in adults may include coughing when eating or drinking, difficulty swallowing saliva, a gurgly voice, difficulty chewing some foods, as well as food getting stuck in or

spilling from the mouth."

Mrs Shorten said speech pathologists play a crucial role in helping to manage these difficulties thereby improving people's quality of life.

"One of my recent clients, Marjorie, suffered a stroke which affected her ability to chew and swallow. Following speech pathology assessment, management, and monitoring, she has made good progress with her eating," she said.

"Initially she required a tube in her stomach for nutrition, but this week we will be removing this tube as Marjorie can now take all her food and drink orally.

"Speech Pathology Week provides an opportunity to raise awareness of our work with speech and language difficulties, as well as with dysphagia.

"There are treatments available to help manage dysphagia. If you are concerned, visit your local GP who could refer you to a speech pathologist."

Speech Pathology Week, this year is themed: Feeding and swallowing - it's no choking matter, and is an initiative of Speech Pathology Australia, the peak national body for speech pathologists in Australia

For more information visit: www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au.