



Speech therapist speaks out

WA COUNTRY Health Service speech pathologist Mari Treasure visited students at North Merredin Primary School last week to raise awareness for Speech Pathology Week.

Ms Treasure said social isolation and frustration are some of the impacts people with communication difficulties can experience.

"We know that communication difficulties can have a major impact on health, wellbeing and quality of life," she said.

"Being able to communicate helps to connect with people, build friendships and participate in discussions, decisions, social events and work activities."

She said communication difficulties include problems with speech, hearing, using and understanding language, reading and writing, and can impact people at any stage of their life.

Ms Treasure was at North Merredin Primary School to assist cerebral palsy student James



New toy to assist: North Merredin Primary School student James Kickett with education assistant Kay Irvin and the Big Mack single message device.

Kickett with a new communication device.

The Big Mack is a simple, one message device which allows a single message to be recorded and played back.

When James wants to join in discussions, he only needs to press the device to get his message across.

He will be able to join in class activities like saying good morning to the teacher or requesting a turn in a game.

This year Speech

Pathology Week's theme, 'communicate to participate', highlights how communication difficulties can impact day-to-day life.

Ms Treasure said communication difficulties in children are often associated with premature birth, hearing impairment, cerebral palsy and autism.

"A person can also develop problems later in life as the result of stroke or degenerative disease," she said.

"Speech pathologists help to improve a person's speech and language skills and for those who have more severe disorders, techniques including picture boards, gestures and signing, assist them to participate more fully in everyday activities."

WA Country Health Service representatives will be in Supa IGA in Merredin on September 2 to help raise awareness of communication difficulties.



Class full of help: James Kickett (centre) with North Merredin Primary School Year 1 and 2 class mates (back row) Percy Hayden, Zeth Dale, Riley Price, Mitchell O'Neil, Luke Mottershead, Kobe Garlett, Paige Corunna, Breeanna Saunders, Corey Craine, James Hutt, Dylan Johnson, Joseph Taylor, Maddison McWilliam, Reece Whitelaw, Kayla Taylor, Courtney McWilliam, (front row) June Garlett, Blake McKinnon, Carrissa Sutherland-Scott and Thomas Flint.