

Media Release



Embargoed until: 20 October

Top authors awarded for excellence in children's language and literacy development

Speech Pathology Australia will award three authors tomorrow for excellence in the development of children's speech, language and literacy skills.

"The alarming decline in literacy (reading) skills in Australia over the past decade highlights the importance of developing children's language and literacy from an early age - seven million adult Australians have literacy skills that are inadequate to meet the demands of everyday life," said Speech Pathology Australia's national public affairs councillor, Judith Rathmell.

"As the peak professional body for speech pathologists we are in a unique position to recommend books to parents and educators, that can assist children's speech, language and literacy development.

"An engaging story encourages children to develop their imagination and curiosity, and to explore new ideas, which is vital for language and literacy.

"Learning to read is the foundation for future academic success. Students with language and literacy disorders experience difficulty with the school curriculum and this often leads to disengagement and behaviour disorders," said Ms Rathmell.

Academic success, including literacy, is a known protective factor against many long-term issues including poor school retention rates, diminished employment opportunities, substance abuse and juvenile offending.

"Speech Pathology Australia applauds the government's National Early Childhood Development Strategy and Early Years Learning Framework – reflecting that language is one of the key building blocks allowing a child to communicate, interact with others and learn," said Ms Rathmell.

Early intervention for oral language deficits is crucial to ensure a healthy transition to literacy. Approximately 16% of Australian children have difficulties learning to read. Speech Pathologists are the professionals who assess, diagnose and treat oral language and reading deficits.

The Awards, which began in 2003, will be presented at Civic Library in Canberra tomorrow.

This year's guest speakers are News presenter, Jessica Good of WIN NEWS and Ms Joy Burch, MLA, representing the ACT Chief Minister's Office.

Authors Ruth Starke (*Noodle Pie*), Mark Carthew (*The Gobbling Tree*) and Ursula Dubosarsky (*The Terrible Plop*) will tomorrow receive one of Speech Pathology Australia's 2009 Book of the Year Awards.

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

Media contacts:

Caroline Huze, Marketing & Communications on 0402 919 839 or marketing@speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

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Notes to Media:

- Speech Pathology Australia's national Public Affairs councillor, Judith Rathmell, is available for interview.
- The Book of the Year Awards Ceremony will be at ACT Civic Library (180 London Circuit, Canberra City) at 10.00am – 11.30am on 20 October, 2009.
- Images of book covers are available in jpeg format.

Book of the Year Awards winners – Best Books for Language Development:

Award category	Author	Book
Young Children (2 – 5 years)	Ursula Dubosarsky	The Terrible Plop Playfully rhythmic language brings alive this Tibetan myth and engages young children with its repetition of “the terrible plop!”
Lower Primary (5 – 8 years)	Mark Carthew	The Gobbling Tree Fires the imagination of children as they search for numerous items and problem solve with innovative solutions. What will the tree gobble up next?!
Upper Primary (8 – 12 years)	Ruth Starke	Noodle Pie A humorous perspective on differing ways of life lifts this story above other more sombre stories tackling the big issues of refugees, cultural differences, poverty and familial obligations.

About Speech Pathology Australia:

Speech Pathology Australia is the national peak body for more than 4,500 members who specialise in working with people of all ages who have communication or swallowing difficulties.

The Association supports and regulates the ethical, clinical and professional standards of its members. The Association also lobbies and advocates for people with communication and swallowing difficulties.

For further information please visit: www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

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