



## Health Speech Disorders

The ability to communicate is a basic human need that many of us take for granted says Speech Pathology Australia national president Trish Bradd.

"Communication is part of our daily life," she said.

"But for the one in seven Australians with some type of communication difficulty, everyday activities such as ordering lunch, paying a bill or buying a train ticket, can be hard and frustrating."

Speech pathologists understand these issues and play a vital role in helping those with speech and language problems.

"Working closely with other health professionals, speech pathologists have an important role in treating and assisting a range of people with speech and language difficulties," Trish said.

Without this help, children and adults may suffer mental health issues and behavioural problems, display poor self-esteem and can struggle to manage social relationships and sustain employment.

Trish said communication disorders varied in their duration and severity and included problems with speech, using and understanding language, voice, fluency, hearing, reading and writing.

"Communication disorders can be hereditary, occur in childhood or happen as the result of stroke, neurological disease or serious injury," she said.



When 64-year-old former electrical engineer Brian suffered a stroke three and a half years ago it significantly affected his ability to communicate.

He then had to work closely with speech pathologists to initially relearn basic words.

"At first they ran some tests and I couldn't even say duck and only got four words out of 40," he said.

"After three months I could say 10 out of 40 words and two years later it was more like 38 out of 40."

He said after his stroke, hearing and understanding words and sounds was difficult.

Most of the time he has to look directly at a person when they are talking or ask them to write down what they have said.

"Working with a speech pathologist has given me back my quality of life," Brian said.