

## MEDIA RELEASE



## **#Talkwithme during Speech Pathology Week**

It's that time again: *Speech Pathology Week (23-29 August, 2015)* and this year's theme is *Talk with me*.

Every day more than 1.1 million Australians have difficulty communicating, says Meredith Prain PhD, CPSP – a Melbourne-based Speech Pathologist with Able Australia's Deafblind Services team.

A recent Senate Inquiry highlighted that communication disorders are more prevalent or on-par with the number of people with diabetes and three times the number of those with dementia. Both of these conditions are national health priorities and attract significant attention and resourcing. Communication disorders, however, are largely invisible.

Communication is a basic human right. Each year Speech Pathology Australia hosts *Speech Pathology Week* to make Australians more aware of those in our community who have a speech or swallowing difficulty.

"It's concerning to see the extent of communication disorders in our community. Such disorders contribute to poor educational outcomes, reduced employment opportunities and an increased likelihood of social, emotional and mental health issues," said Meredith.

Three in every 1,000 newborns have hearing loss, which without intervention can affect their speech, language and literacy.

Around 13,000 Australians use electronic communication aids to get their message across, while 20 per cent of four year olds have difficulty understanding or using language.

But speech disorders don't just affect the young. At least 30 per cent of people post-stroke suffer loss of language, with 85 per cent of those with Parkinson's disease having voice, speech and/or swallowing difficulties.

These are the challenges that confront speech pathologists every day.

"Speech pathologists are specialists in all forms of communication. We work with people to maximise their ability to communicate in a way that best meets their needs and abilities," said Meredith.



Speech pathologists work with people who have difficulty communicating because of developmental delays, stroke, brain injuries, learning disability, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy and hearing loss, as well as other problems that can affect speech, language and communication.

Speech pathologists work in a wide range of settings – schools, hospitals, nursing homes, universities, kindergartens, rehabilitation centres, community health centres, private practice and mental health services.

This *Speech Pathology Week*, give a voice to those with a communication disorder and help end their silence #SPweek #Talkwithme

For more information about Speech Pathology Week visit [www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au)

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[Speech Pathology Australia](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au) is the national peak body representing more than 6,500 speech pathologists. The Association supports and regulates the ethical, clinical and professional standards of its members, as well as lobbying and advocating for access to services that benefit people with communication and swallowing difficulties.

[Able Australia](http://www.ableaustralia.org.au) is a leading not-for-profit organisation, supporting people living with multiple disabilities, including deafblindness and those in need of community support. From its humble beginnings in 1967, Able Australia has grown into a diverse and dynamic organisation and today supports more than 4000 people around the country.