

## WHAT CAN A SPEECH PATHOLOGIST DO WITHIN THEIR ROLE?

FOR YOUR CLIENTS AND FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

### **Grampians Region HACC Guiding Principle:**

**The Grampians Region HACC Program promotes effective working relationships between HACC funded Speech Pathologists and Living at Home Assessment and Care Planning Officers.**

Speech Pathologists are qualified Allied Health Practitioners trained to provide individualised assessments, develop intervention and enhancement plans and implement therapeutic programs for their clients.

### **To find a Speech Pathologist in your area you can search the internet at:**

- ConnectingCare ( <https://www.connectingcare.com/> ) OR
- Speech Pathology Australia ( <http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/information-for-the-community/find-a-speech-pathologist> ) OR YOUR
- Local community health centre or health service

It is always useful to ring and discuss your concern/questions to ensure you are making an appropriate referral.

Person centred practice in supporting older people and people with disabilities involves looking for the reasons behind changing abilities, to acknowledge the concern and support the person to overcome issues rather than avoiding the concern or increasing services without exploring alternative options.

### **Why do we need Speech Pathologists?**

"Communication – the process of being able to understand and be understood – is something most of us take for granted. Communication disabilities are the result of problems with speech, using and understanding language, voice, fluency, hearing or reading and writing. One in seven Australians has some form of communication difficulty.

Speech Pathologists provide broad range of services. They work with people who have difficulty communicating because of progressive neurological diseases, stroke, brain injuries, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, chronic disease, dementia and sensory impairments as well as other problems that can affect speech and language. People who experience difficulties swallowing food and drinking safely can also be helped by a speech pathologist"<sup>i</sup>.

For example, consider if your clients who have experienced a stroke or have muscular skeletal conditions such as MS may benefit from an assessment by a speech pathologist to support their ability to maintain their nutrition and hydration

## How can the HACC team work with Speech Pathologists?

All HACC team members can benefit from understanding the role and skill base of the speech pathologist. The Speech Pathologist will report on their assessment and provide guidance on how to support the client/their carers<sup>1</sup>.

Speech Pathologists can also request support from HACC to implement specific support arrangements that will assist the client to remain safely at home and improve the client's quality of life. This assistance can take many forms – such as:

- Advising on the type of food/liquid and nutrition assistance that a client may require and training HACC Community Support Workers to provide appropriate assistance
- Training HACC community support workers to assist the client with speech difficulties and prompting the client to do their speech exercises
- Working with HACC respite providers to understand how best to assist the client to speak in group situations and ensure that the client is listened to appropriately
- Supporting carers' to assist the client with reading or writing to maintain their independence in their normal activities

The above are simple examples. There may be a number of other ways that a speech pathologist can be of assistance to the client, yourself and the community support workers – just ask them.

Speech Pathologists will also assist through secondary consultation (advice and suggestions) or by providing the types of assessment listed above to assist in the enhancement of client independence and quality of life.

Engaging speech pathologists in your practice can broaden your horizons in relation to client choice and service delivery techniques. They can provide training for family members/friends and HACC team members in how best to work with and support the client. They can assist you to put person centred principles into practice and build them into your care planning and service delivery models.

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<sup>1</sup> Speech Pathology Australia, 30 June 2014 (website address above)