



24 August 2020

## **Communicating with Confidence in Loddon and Buloke Shires a priority**

During Speech Pathology Week (23-29 August), the Strong Families and Strong Families (SFSC) Buloke and Loddon programs are focussing on this year's theme "communicating with confidence" as part of their vision for all children to start school ready to learn.

According to Speech Pathologist and SFSC Early Years Facilitator Susie Hawke, more than 1.2 million Australians have a communication disability affecting a person's ability to understand and be understood by others.

"Communicating with confidence is vital to enable everyone to participate fully in the social, educational, economic and sporting aspects of community life," said Ms Hawke.

"Australians with communication disability or speech and language delay have great difficulty maximising future educational, health and social outcomes, without the intervention of a speech pathologist," she said.

According to Speech Pathology Australia, only 38 per cent of Australians with a communication disability are participating in the workforce compared with 80 per cent of people without a communication disability.

People with a communication disability are also less likely to have a non-school qualification (42 per cent), than those without a communication disability (61 per cent).

Ms Hawke says communication, by definition, involves at least two people, so it is important that everyone understands that communication is more than speech.

"Australians with communication difficulties can communicate with others using a variety of means including word or picture-based communication boards/books, sign and gesture, and spelling.

"Technology is playing a growing and vital role in keeping Australians with communication difficulties engaged with their family, friends and those in their community," she said.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has highlighted the challenges faced by Australians with a communication disability which is why "Communicating with Confidence" is the theme for Speech Pathology Week this year.

During the week Susie and the SFSC team will be working with young children and their families across the Loddon and Buloke Shires to provide them with the support they need to confidently communicate, including a range of tips and ideas via their Facebook pages – @SFSC Loddon and @SFSC Buloke.

"Children and older people make up the majority of people with communication disability, with children more likely to have a profound/severe communication disability," says Ms Hawke.

"Simple activities such as talking with your children regularly about a wide range of subjects, and reading together can have a huge impact on a child's speech and language and their ability to communicate confidently," she said.

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

-- ends --

For more information, please contact SFSC Early Years Facilitator Susie Hawke on 0418 811 414