

MEDIA RELEASE

Communication Access For All

20/01/2015

Over 1.1 million Australians have a communication disorder, and over 15,000 of those use non electronic communication aids as an alternative or to assist them to communicate.

Emma Douglass, Regional Communication Service Speech Pathologist with Sunraysia Community Health Services says "many different conditions result in a person having little or no speech and needing assistance to communicate".

These include lifelong developmental disabilities such as cerebral palsy or intellectual disability and conditions that appear later in life such as Parkinson's disease, motor neuron disease, severe aphasia (language difficulty following stroke) or acquired brain injury. Other conditions may result in someone having a temporary loss of speech, such as burns, surgery after cancer, trauma or being on a breathing tube in the intensive care unit.

"These days, people tend towards using technology as an aid or substitute for speech, with mobile phones and tablets easily accessible" said Ms Douglass. "However, being immediately able to convey your message via a phrase card on your keyring or in your wallet is much more efficient for most people."

Often a mixture of both electronic and non-electronic options is necessary for efficient and successful communication for those with a speech difficulty.

The Non-Electronic Communication Aids Scheme (NECAS) provides a range of non-electronic aids to adults who have speech difficulties. The scheme funds aids such as communication boards and books, community request cards, personal histories, activity schedules and many more, and will support you to develop an aid that suits your specific communication needs. A similar scheme for children has recently been piloted and aims to continue this service for those under the age of 18.

NECAS Speech Pathologist Clara Navaretti will be in Mildura on Thursday 4 February to talk to those interested in finding out more about the scheme. There will be a brief presentation on the NECAS scheme and how to apply, followed by a large display of non-electronic communication aids.

A support worker of a past client of NECAS explains that "Prior to this day, although many attempts had been made, Sandra showed very little interest in using non electronic communication aids."

Since then, Sandra takes her card which we have put on a lanyard everywhere, she takes it to her day placement, she has worn it on the train, travelling to Bendigo to see her Mum, and she walked down to Woodend independently, to buy herself some winter sheets from Target.



Her confidence has increased, and the feeling of achievement when she shows her card to members of the public and how positively they then respond to her is evident.

"All staff are saying that they have never seen Sandra so happy", said the support worker. "Sandra is much more confident in the way that she approaches and responds to people, and I can only see things getting better and better for her from here on in."

To secure your place at the information session, RSVP to Emma Douglass at SCHS on 5022 5444.

END

Media enquiries to:

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