



MEDIA RELEASE

SCHS Speech Pathologist helps Kindergarten Teachers identify speech and language needs

19 July 2016

"Jacinta Curley's kindergarten capacity building pilot project has developed a new and innovative service delivery model for SCHS's Speech Pathology Department" said Simone Heald, CEO Sunraysia Community Health Services.

Ms Curley was awarded the Ian Dickie Scholarship 2015-2016 for her project, which has resulted in the development of screening tools, a speech and language kit, a training package for kindergarten staff and a sustainable model of support to help children in 4 year old kindergarten experiencing speech and language difficulties. The final stage of the project took place on Tuesday evening, 19 July, at SCHS, with the provision of a free professional development training session to all kindergarten staff in Mildura, and the launch of the Kindergarten Capacity Building Pilot Project Speech and Language Kit.

Australian Early Development Census Data, from testing undertaken during the first year of school, indicates children entering school in the Sunraysia region are less ready for school in several areas, including speech and language development, than children in other areas of the state. The project aimed to engage with kindergarten staff, to increase children's speech and language skills, and support children to reach their full potential.

The project was awarded the Ian Dickie Scholarship, valued at up to \$10,000 annually. Simone Heald, CEO reported "the scholarship aims to provide an opportunity for an SCHS program area or employee to trial and develop new models of excellence, innovation and leading edge service delivery" and "Ms Curley has definitely succeeded in meeting this aim through her project".

The Award honours the ethos of previous Board member, Ian Dickie. Ian Dickie was a Board Director of SCHS for 18 years who sadly passed away in June 2012. Ian valued and loved his time with SCHS as a volunteer, working towards making SCHS what it is today. Ian simply wanted SCHS to deliver services to the community in a way that he would expect to be able to access and receive health services. Eighteen years is a tremendous contribution to improving and maintaining the community's best health.

This year's successful submission, the Kindergarten Capacity Building Pilot Project, has piloted a link worker approach to building capacity with staff who work with children experiencing speech and /or language difficulties. The three kindergartens who were engaged in this project over the past 12 months were Red Cliffs, Mildura South and Pasadena Kindergartens. The outcomes of this project resulted in the development of:

1. A Screening Tool - to briefly and efficiently assess for speech and language difficulties, and enable teachers to confidently identify children experiencing difficulties and to empower teachers to make a referral to speech pathology services
2. A Speech & Language Resource Kit- a kit of resources and activities to enable staff to work with children on various aspects of speech and language
3. A Training Package – to help teachers develop understanding of the speech and language expectations of a child in 4 year old kinder . Staff will be supported to learn how to screen speech and language skills using the tools provided, and provide intervention to target specific areas of speech and language development using the speech and language kit.
4. A Sustainable Model- SCHS has committed to continuing the work of the project in an ongoing manner, by including its outcomes in its departmental pathways and procedures. It will also seek to establish a link worker in each kindergarten to act as a point of contact for ongoing support from the Speech Pathology department at SCHS and linkages with supporting services in the region.

Ultimately the goal will be for SCHS to roll out a link worker model in the Speech Pathology Department which will be self-sustaining with the resources that have been developed by Jacinta. It is hoped this will increase communication and collaboration with kindergartens in the Mildura LGA and possibly long day care centres that offer 4 year old kindergarten programs into the future.

Ms Curley has delighted in the opportunity to lead this 12 month project, collaborating with link workers Lynne Wenborn (Red Cliffs), Kim Searle (Passadena) and Joy Stevens (Mildura South). A Speech and Language Kit has been developed for each kindergarten in the Mildura LGA, with encouragement for each kindergarten to make a commitment to include ongoing engagement of this resource in their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and annual planning agenda.

Ms Heald recognised the efforts Ms Curley has made to achieve the project outcomes, in addition to her role as full time speech pathologist, and noted that 'through her passion and enthusiasm for providing ongoing support to clients and carers in the community, Ms Curley hopes children in the community will ultimately benefit from the increased knowledge and training that will be provided to kindergarten staff involved in the Mildura region'.

SCHS Speech Pathology Services, as part of the Child Health Service at SCHS, provide assessment and intervention for children aged 0-6 years and adults over 18 years, who are not otherwise engaged with speech and language services. There is an open referral system at SCHS via the Doorway to Health team, so a referral can be made by a parent or carer calling SCHS on (03) 5022 5444.

Testimonies:

Joy Stevens- Mildura South:

"Before becoming involved in the speech and language group with Jacinta Curley I was under the misconception that the speech therapist worked in their offices, we sent parents to them and we got the occasional follow up report.

Having been involved with the group I now realise that they are a valuable resource for us and they want to reach out to us so they can assist more children.



If I am unsure about a child I now know that they are only an email or a phone call away.

This information will be on your brochures.

I now feel confident as you will, to do a quick 5-7min screener and if still not sure I am then able to 'paint a little picture' of what the child can or cannot do and know that the girls will be happy to support me by saying either that I can assist them with things in the kit or I need to use the screener to help talk to the parents and encourage some follow up"

Kim Searle- Pasadena:

"Being a link worker for this project has been both educational and rewarding. We have helped to develop this screening tool for all of us to use in our kinder rooms. It will empower all staff members to be able to work with individual or small groups of children to help develop a language skill that they require help with or have the confidence to suggest to a family that their child may require some assistance from a speech therapist.

We have all increased our confidence in being able to identify children who may require a referral to a speech therapist. We are confident to use the screening tool to identify the language issues that the child may be having and offer a referral to the parent that either we can send through to a speech therapist or they can follow up with themselves".

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Media enquiries to:

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A photo will be available to support this release prior to the event. It will be take at approximately 5pm on Tuesday 19 July and available prior to copy going to print on Tuesday night. Please contact Ms Beauliv if you would like a copy.