50 Years of Speech-Language Therapy in Education
Commemorative eBook

1966 50th 2016
Anniversary
50 years of speech-language therapy in education

This year we celebrate 50 years of providing speech-language therapy to students in Queensland state schools.

This is a significant milestone, demonstrating a longstanding commitment in Queensland to deliver high-quality services that ensure all students can access, participate in and succeed at school.

Communication is essential for learning, literacy and numeracy development, as well as learning how to interact with others.

Speech-language therapy plays an important role in helping students overcome barriers to their learning and helps them to achieve their full potential.

Speech and language services have come a long way in 50 years; from two people supporting five schools in Brisbane to almost 250 speech-language pathologists working across Queensland state schools today.

Research indicates early identification and intervention programs can create positive results for children with communication difficulties and this valuable service is helping to better shape the lives of Queensland children.

On behalf of the State Government, I congratulate our speech-language pathologists on their commitment to Queensland children and on 50 years of providing an excellent service in Queensland state schools.

I thank all the speech-language pathologists who have made a positive difference to the lives of Queensland children over the past 50 years.

The Honourable Kate Jones MP
Minister for Education
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In 2016, departmental speech-language therapy services provide support to schools with a focus on students with speech language communication needs. The service is provided as part of the department’s strategies to ensure all students are engaged in learning, achieving and successfully transitioning to further education, training and work.

The speech-language pathologist works collaboratively as an integral member of the school team; working with teachers to embed their use of high-quality evidence-based teaching practices for students who have speech language communication needs, and supporting students to develop speech language and communicative competence to engage fully in learning and achieve to their potential.

This booklet documents the journey of the service from its small beginnings, and records the voices of past and present departmental speech-language pathologists. It ends looking beyond now to the onward journey of the service.
50 years of speech-language therapy services in the Department of Education and Training

Background and introduction

In commemorating the 50-year anniversary of speech-language therapy (SLT) services in the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET), we highlight the significant role that speech-language pathologists (SLPs) play as members of educational teams in schools across the state.

DET is one of only four Australian education jurisdictions that directly employs SLPs. This has led to DET SLT services evolving over their 50-year history to have an integral role within education due to the centrality of oral language competence for access and participation in schooling. In the 50 years since the establishment of these services, the role of the SLP has changed significantly, moving from a traditional medical model, one-to-one withdrawal focusing predominantly on articulation difficulties and stuttering, to a collaborative,
capacity-building model supporting communication, safe eating and drinking, language and learning across curriculum areas, to ensure that all students are able to participate in rigorous, meaningful educational programs and reach their potential.

In celebrating 50 years of SLT in DET, we celebrate the achievements of the many departmental SLPs who have contributed to and shaped this service — from those who pioneered the sometimes challenging early path, to today’s SLPs who are constantly exploring new and innovative service delivery models.

The information below gives a history of the 50-year journey SLT services have taken in our department. Looking backwards at our history helps us to understand how SLT services have developed over time to what they are now, and prompts us to contemplate what our services might look like in the future to continue to support and improve the education outcomes for students.

The first 25 years

The information below has been summarised from the booklet 25 Years of Speech Therapy in Education 1966–1991 (Department of Education 1991). Please note: The term ‘speech therapist’ is used intentionally in this section to accurately reflect the title of the position at the time.

Early beginnings

In 1939, the Department of Education recognised the need to cater for students with speech disorders, and employed speech correction teachers. At this time there were no speech therapy training courses in Queensland.

A Diploma of Speech Therapy course was established at The University of Queensland in 1962 as a sub-department of the Faculty of Medicine. In the 1960s, the head of this department negotiated with the Department of Education to employ speech therapists. In 1966, the first two speech therapists were appointed.

From 1967, there was a gradual increase in the number of speech therapists employed by the department. In 1968, the first two speech therapy positions outside the Brisbane metropolitan area were filled — one in Toowoomba, and one in Townsville. During this year the first senior speech therapist was also appointed in a part-time capacity. Therapists were itinerant from their homes to schools, often traveling by public transport. Service delivery followed a one-to-one withdrawal model, and therapists worked predominantly with students who had speech difficulties or who stuttered. It is reported that ‘caseloads were very heavy and therapists were required to buy their own equipment and resources’ (Department of Education 1991, p. 2). By the end of the 1960s, there were 18 speech therapists and one senior therapist across the state, who also performed a clinical role.
The second decade: the 1970s

Throughout the 1970s, the number of speech therapists continued to increase. Therapists began to operate from a ‘base’ rather than travelling from their homes to schools. Service delivery continued to be mostly a withdrawal model, but changes to services were beginning. A clearer focus on supporting language difficulties emerged and there was a concerted effort to buy and develop speech and language resources. Intensive early intervention language programs were established, a range of supports was provided to students with hearing impairment and their families, resources enabling parents and teachers to support mild speech difficulties were developed, and inservices were provided to teachers about supporting speech and language difficulties in the classroom. Departmental speech therapists were involved in projects to develop and standardise speech and language tests. By 1979, the number of speech therapists across the state had risen to 42, with additional positions established in the south-east corner of Queensland and other major centres throughout the state. There were also four senior therapist positions, all based in Brisbane.

The 1980s

The 1980s saw further changes to service delivery models, including individual support to students, home- or school-based, consultative support to teachers, developing programs to be implemented by others, and co-planning with teachers to allow support to be provided in the classroom as part of the student’s everyday learning. Speech therapy services began to focus on aligning with the curriculum. The senior therapist positions were upgraded to speech therapist-in-charge positions, and the first adviser in speech therapy position was established. In accordance with departmental policies and initiatives of the mid-80s, a greater focus was given to supporting students with disability. Statewide speech therapy networks were formalised and strengthened when the first statewide Senior Speech Therapists Conference was held in Brisbane in 1986. This conference was integral in establishing networks, and beginning the strategic focus and planning that was crucial in shaping the service and moving it forward.
Throughout the 1980s there was a focus on developing and sharing resources. Such was the commitment to this that a group of speech therapists formed a committee and met voluntarily to develop resources. This was partly due to the fact that, although speech therapists had an approved budget of $440 allocated to them, they were only allowed to purchase specified items. This very restricted choice resulted in some speech therapy offices acquiring multiple copies of the same items, and prompted speech therapists to produce resources they could use in their support of students. When completed, resources were shared across the state.

The Distance Education Speech Therapy (Q-DEST) Project was established to support speech therapy services in more remote areas. The Special Education Resource and Development Centre (SERDC) Therapy Services was established in Cornwall Street, Annerley, to coordinate and advocate for therapy services in the department. The Q-DEST project and the speech therapist responsible for it moved to this centre.

Two consultant in speech therapy positions were established, and were also based at Cornwall Street.

Advancing technologies, such as videoconferencing, were used and allowed professional development to be provided to speech therapists across the state. The first editions of *Talkabout* (the professional journal for SLPs) were published.

The latter part of the 1980s saw the emergence of research on the correlation between phonological awareness and later literacy success. Departmental speech therapists began working to incorporate phonological awareness training and support into their service delivery to schools and students.

In 1989, there were 75.2 speech therapy positions, one adviser in speech therapy, 8.8 speech therapist-in-charge positions and one senior education officer – therapy services across the state.

**The early 1990s**

The start of the 1990s saw some organisational restructures, and the department took over the responsibility from a range of other departments and non-government organisations for occupational therapists and physiotherapists working in schools. The positions supervisor of speech therapy services, supervisor of occupational therapy and supervisor of physiotherapy were established.

Key areas of focus for speech therapy services were defining the speech therapy role, developing service delivery models, resource production and distribution, professional development and networking.

The silver jubilee of speech therapy services in the department was held in 1991. A project team was appointed to produce the booklet *25 Years of Speech Therapy in Education 1966–1991* (Department of Education 1991) to commemorate and celebrate this anniversary. This booklet provided a record of the changes to speech therapy services, from the humble beginnings in 1966 with just two speech therapists, to the middle of 1991, when there were 86.2 speech therapy positions, one adviser in speech therapy, 8.8 speech therapist-in-charge positions and a senior education officer – therapy services. It details the evolution of speech therapy services, and highlights just how much speech therapy in the Department of Education changed over the course of its first 25 years.
The next 25 years

Throughout the 1990s, speech therapy in education continued its focus on aligning services with departmental initiatives and the curriculum under the guidance and direction of the senior education officer – therapy services, the supervisor of speech therapy and the statewide speech therapists-in-charge network.

A range of services was provided to students and school teams. There was a significant departmental emphasis on early intervention, especially in the area of early special education, with speech therapy services also focusing on these areas. Therapists continued to develop resources, many of which were inservice materials for teachers.

Rapidly advancing technologies were used to enhance the skills development and participation of students with communication needs. Increasing accessibility through technology also dramatically changed the ways in which speech therapists performed the administrative components of their roles.

There was an ongoing focus within speech therapy services on maintaining strong professional networks and on delivering and attending professional development.

During the first half of the 1990s, speech therapists across the department spent much time promoting and explaining the Special Needs in Communication model to help departmental staff understand the impact language disorders have on accessing the curriculum, and to advocate for the provision of appropriate support for the students this model describes. The SERDC became the Low Incidence Support Centre (LISC), which encompassed guidance and counselling services, hearing impairment services, intellectual impairment services, learning difficulties services, library and information services, physical impairment services, therapy services and vision impairment services.
In 1993, *Ascertainment Guidelines for Students with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties* (Department of Education 1993) were introduced to identify and resource students with hearing impairment, intellectual impairment, physical impairment, severe and multiple impairments, vision impairment and learning difficulties. Speech therapy services strongly advocated for the recognition of speech-language impairment (SLI) as a disability category, and an understanding of the significant impact language impairment has on accessing the curriculum.

A nationwide change to the name of the speech therapy profession occurred in 1993, with much of the broader profession adopting the name ‘speech pathologist.’ In DET, the name ‘speech-language pathologist’ (SLP) was chosen to reflect the crucial role language plays in accessing the curriculum, and to reinforce the support SLPs provide in this area.

In 1996, following a three-year period of collaboration and consultation, the policy document *Guidelines for Speech-Language Therapy in Schools* (Education Queensland 1996) was released. This document reinforced school-based management of the support for students with communication needs.

Speech language impairment (SLI) was also approved as an ascertainment category in 1996. This meant that students who met criteria for SLI were included in the targeted provisions for students with disability. Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) was also included as a new category at this time, and the *Ascertainment Guidelines for Students with Disabilities* were revised (Education Queensland 1997) to reflect the addition of these two categories.

The first SLI ascertainment occurred in 1997. The first advisory visiting teachers for SLI and ASD were also appointed in this year. In 1998, the first revision occurred of *Guidelines for Speech-Language Therapy Services* (Education Queensland 1996). This was updated and released with the new title *SM-10 Speech-Language Therapy Services in State Schools* (Education Queensland 1998).

During the late 1990s, LISC’s name was changed to the Low Incidence Unit (LIU). It continued to provide statewide support to staff through the maintenance of networks, development of resources, management of an equipment loans facility, advocacy and support for students with disability, and the provision of mentoring, guidance and professional development.

In 1999, the manager-therapy services at LIU assumed the responsibility of ensuring information sharing between therapy services and Central Office.

At the end of the decade, there were 124 SLP positions and 7.8 speech-language pathologist-in-charge (SLPIC) positions based throughout the state, and two speech-language therapy advisers (SLTAs) based at LIU.
The 2000s

The first decade of the new millennium included an overall departmental focus on inclusive education for students with disability. A Ministerial Taskforce on Inclusive Education (students with disabilities) was established. Individual Education Plans became mandatory for students ascertained at Level 4, 5 or 6. The ascertainment policy and procedures were revised, and appraisement became the process used for identifying students with learning difficulties and disabilities. The results of the ascertainment process were recorded into the Students with Disability Central On-Line Reporting database (SCOLR), which went live into Queensland schools in 2001.

Throughout the early part of the decade, there was a concerted effort to encourage departmental staff to use the wide array of available technology to support the learning of students with disability. A Learning and Development Centre (Information and Communication Technologies – Students with Disability) was established to provide professional development and support to staff across the state in the use of technology for students with disability. Many SLPs accessed professional development and support from this centre and attended the after school ‘playgroups’ it facilitated and offered.

The late 2000s saw the introduction of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships (Commonwealth Department of Education and Training 2009), which came from a 2008–09 federal government budget announcement. This initiative provided funding to deliver a national action plan for literacy and numeracy, with the aim of improving literacy and numeracy outcomes across the country.

The statewide speech-language pathologist-in-charge network organised itself into small focus groups that took on responsibilities reflective of the goals and strategies outlined in the departmental document Queensland State Education – 2010 (QSE 2010) (Department of Education 2000). This ensured SLT services continued to align and support meeting key departmental goals and priorities throughout the 2000s.
The statewide SLT services’ commitment to networking and professional development led to the ongoing annual provision of a statewide induction program for newly appointed SLPs, statewide *Training and Development Seminar* (TADS) for therapists and nurses, a *Planning and Development Seminar* for SLPiCs, the ongoing production of *Talkabout*, and regional meetings once each term for SLPs throughout the state.

During the year 2000, some of the services operating out of LIU, including therapy services, moved from Cornwall Street, Annerley to a campus at Merton Road, Woolloongabba. The name Low Incidence Unit was retained until 2002, when its name was changed to the Disability Services Support Unit (DSSU).

*Priorities in Speech-Language Therapy Services in State Schools* (Education Queensland 2002) was released in 2002. This document was developed by a statewide working party in response to the *Action Plan: Education Provision for Students with Disabilities 1998–2002* (Education Queensland 1998), which recommended the development of statewide prioritisation processes for occupational therapy, physiotherapy and SLT services. The Priorities document provides a framework of principles and factors to guide school-based decision-making processes for using SLT services in schools.

In 2002, the ascertainment policy and procedures were reviewed, leading to what became known to SLPs as the 2002 SLI Review. As a part of this, every student in the state with a SLI ascertainment required a full ascertainment review. This resulted in SLPs conducting an additional 929 assessments in order to complete the review (Education Queensland 2002).

This year also saw the release of *Queensland the Smart State – Education and Training Reforms for the Future: A White Paper* (Education Queensland 2002). This document outlined a package of education reform agendas, including a significant focus on secondary schooling and the introduction of a Preparatory (Prep) Year into Queensland schools. SLT services were quick to incorporate these reform agendas into the support provided to schools, and the 2003 *Speech-Language Therapy Annual Report* (Education Queensland 2003) indicates that many SLPs across the state provided services that supported these initiatives.

A unique opportunity was presented to departmental SLPs in 2004 when Speech Pathology Australia and The University of Queensland hosted the 26th World Congress of the International Association of Logopaedics and Phoniatriacs in Brisbane. This was attended by 60 per cent of Education Queensland SLPs, enabling them to participate in a wide variety of professional events with lectures and presentations covering all aspects of communication disorders. More than 30 countries were represented, providing an international forum for researchers and clinicians with an interest in communication to share ideas and to map out future directions for research and clinical activities (Education Queensland 2004).

In 2005, the Education Adjustment Program (EAP) replaced ascertainment. The program focused on the identification of the teaching adjustments that are made to support students with disability.
During this same year, the *Disability Standards for Education* (Cwlth, 2005) became federal law. This was the same year that a real understanding of the link between communication skills and behaviour at school was demonstrated in the Murrumba, Mooloolaba and Nambour District Cluster, where a teacher position was converted to an SLP position working in the Learning and Engagement Team focusing on behaviour management (DEA, 2005). By 2007, five regions had SLT time allocated to specifically support Regional Behaviour Teams and to contribute to projects within Positive Learning Centres.

During 2006, the North Queensland SLPs based in Mt Isa presented at the *Speech Pathology Australia National Conference* in Perth, and won the North Queensland Showcase Awards for Excellence in the *Innovation* category for the development and implementation of the *Mount Isa SLP Early Intervention Service Delivery Project* (DETA 2006b). These materials utilised a whole-school approach to student learning focused on developing oral language and phonological awareness skills. In 2006, a new centralised process commenced for verification in six EAP disability categories, and a new database, the Adjustment Information Management System (AIMS), was introduced to replace SCOLR. During this year, an increasing range of technologies was used for storing and sharing information and resources, and for providing professional development. Examples of these include Blackboard communities, Blackboard training courses and online professional learning communities (DETA 2006a).

Prep was introduced into all Queensland schools in 2007. SLPs across the state provided the full array of service delivery options to the new Prep cohorts and Prep teachers in their schools.

This year also saw an enhanced career structure for SLPs that resulted from an earlier enterprise bargaining agreement. The structure included one PO6 position, six PO5 progression positions and 10 PO4 clinical progression positions across the three years of the agreement. The PO6 role was the principal advisor – speech-language therapy (PA-SLT), based at DSSU. Principal advisor roles were also established for physiotherapy and occupational therapy services. The PA-SLT provided statewide strategic leadership and direction for SLT services, and was responsible for the profession-specific line management for the SLTAs based at DSSU.

These staffing changes led to the formalisation of the Speech-Language Therapy Strategic Leaders Network (SLT SLN). A key initiative of this group was a determined push to fill vacant positions across the state, especially those that had been without SLPs for lengthy periods of time. The brochure *10 Reasons to Work as an SLP with EQ* (DETA 2007) and a promotional pictorial PowerPoint (talking book) were developed to highlight the benefits of working in EQ to prospective employees. Vacant positions were advertised on university websites and four scholarship positions were negotiated and successfully filled in regions where long-term vacancies had occurred. Lectures about SLT in education were presented at universities in Brisbane and Townsville (DETA 2007).

Appraisement of learning difficulties was discontinued, and the existing criteria for the six EAP disability categories were reviewed, examining best practice in education at the time, definitions of disability, procedural consistency and conceptual clarity (DET 2009). The revised criteria for each of the six EAP disability categories included information and processes for identifying the impairment (Criterion 1) and information required to document the educational impact of the impairment, and the required education adjustments (Criterion 2). The changes to the criteria for the six EAP disability categories were gradually
implemented, and by 2009 verification requests for all EAP disability categories used the revised criteria.

In 2008, NAPLAN was introduced and implemented across Australia for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. The SLPs in the department advocated strongly for the ways in which they could support students’ literacy and numeracy outcomes.

There was also an increasing focus on how departmental SLPs support students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the Blackboard course Assessing the CALD Student – A Guide for SLPs (DETA 2008) was developed. This online course provided SLPs with current information on the typical development of language in bilingual students, and used best practice evidence to guide SLPs in assessing bilingual students and interpreting the information obtained. Also during this year, recruitment to the PO5 and PO4 SLP positions was completed and the first release of OneSchool took place (DETE 2013).

In 2009, the revised criteria for verification in the category of SLI was rolled out. Much time was spent at all levels of SLT services supporting staff to understand, adopt and implement the revised criteria. The ongoing commitment and dedication to communication and networking were enhanced by the establishment of the statewide EQ SLP listserv, an online communication forum for profession-specific discussion, problem solving and sharing. The SLTAs at DSSU oversaw the distribution of the profession-specific alerting service Speech Blurt, which ensured EQ SLPs had timely notification of departmental news and upcoming professional development opportunities, as well as information about current literature relevant to the SLP role (DET 2009).

Of interest through this decade was the movement of people who had previously held senior SLP roles into other, non-SLT roles in the department, such as principal education officers in regions.

At the end of the decade, there were 138.6 SLPs and 12.7 regional senior SLPs throughout the state, 2.5 FTE adviser positions at DSSU and one PA-SLT.

2010s

The next decade began with a departmental restructure, and in 2010, the 10 education regions changed geographical boundaries to become seven regions.

The start of the decade saw the departmental trial Recognition and Response (RnR) (DET, 2010a), a whole-school intervention approach based on Response to Intervention (RTI). The learnings from this were used in the development of the Whole School Approach to Supporting Student Learning (DETE 2014). In line with this, the SLT SLN focused on supporting SLPs to provide SLT services within a whole-school approach to improvement model.

The release in 2011 of the Flying Start of Queensland White Paper (DET 2011c) announced the planned move of Year 7 into Junior Secondary in 2015.

During 2012, the federal government introduced the More Support for Students with Disabilities National Partnership (Australian Government 2012). The department implemented 15 discrete projects across six national partnership outputs, with seven regional implementation teams. Many SLPs engaged with these projects.
Focusing specifically on SLT services, 2010 saw a revision of SM-10 Speech-Language Therapy Services in State Schools (Education Queensland 1998), which was released, with the title Speech-Language Therapy Services in State Schools (DET 2010). This document can be accessed on the DET website.

This year also saw a major milestone for SLT services, with three schools using national partnerships funding to purchase extra SLT time to support their literacy development and outcomes. This, combined with schools using their funds to employ SLPs on behaviour teams, meant that 3.5 full-time equivalent SLP positions across the state were funded directly by schools.

The trend of schools funding SLP time continued into 2011 and increased to the equivalent of 4.9 full-time positions. Another positive trend was the decreasing number of statewide SLP vacancies. However, growth in positions meant that more than 50 percent of SLPs working in the department had less than 5 years experience, and providing professional support and development was another area of focus for the SLP strategic leaders.

In 2011, SLPs across the state were situated at 68 base locations. The document Guidelines for the Management of Base Locations of Department of Education and Training (DET) Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists and Speech-language Pathologists (Therapists) (DET 2011d) was released to support departmental therapists by detailing the structures and facilities a base location is required to provide. The 1969 section of 25 Years of Speech Therapy in Education 1966–1991 demonstrates just how much conditions for therapists have improved compared to the earlier days of SLT services: ‘In schools, speech therapists worked in “unoccupied” health rooms, staffrooms, storerooms and in broom cupboards under stairwells’ (Department of Education 1991, p. 2).

During 2011, representatives of the SLT SLN continued SLT services’ ongoing relationships with universities by participating in consultation workshops and reference groups for proposed speech pathology courses at Griffith University, Southern Cross University, Australian Catholic University and Central Queensland University. It is anticipated that the cooperative relationships with universities should continue to assist with recruitment and retention of staff over time.

In 2011, clinical placements with DET SLPs were provided for 39 speech pathology students from The University of Queensland and James Cook University courses, and seven lectures were delivered to students by departmental SLPs.

Also in 2011, international collaboration occurred between SLPs in Metropolitan Region and Professor Laura Justice from Ohio State University regarding the development of an authorised adaptation of Read It Again – PreK! (Justice & McGinty 2009). The result of this collaboration saw the launch of Read It Again – Foundation Q! in 2013 (DETE 2013). An update to the Blackboard course Assessing the CALD Student – A Guide for SLPs (DET 2011b) took place in 2011 to ensure departmental SLPs use current evidence-based practice in their support of diverse learners.
In 2011, a total of 19,668 students received a speech-language therapy service (delivered one-to-one and/or in a group) to improve their speaking, listening and communication skills. On average, one full-time equivalent SLP provided services to 142 students. Across the state, a total of 10,137 teachers, teacher aides and parents accessed training and development provided by SLPs.’ (DET 2011a).

During 2012, the revised version of Priorities in Speech-Language Therapy Services in State Schools (DET 2012) was uploaded to the department’s website. This document’s intent remained the same, but it was updated to reflect departmental priorities and terminology.

In 2012, a decision was made to regionalise and realign the services provided by Disability Services Support Unit. This meant that these services were now provided closer to schools from within regions. North Coast region supported the continued publication of Talkabout. During 2012, Talkabout celebrated its 25 years of publication. Two commemorative editions of Talkabout were published, both containing reflections and memories of the publications over the years.

The SLT SLN continued its regular teleconferences and continued to provide support to activities such as the Statewide SLP Induction, TADS, (renamed in 2013 to the Therapy, Nursing and Teaching Conference, or TNT for short) and an annual planning meeting for members of the SLT SLN.

In 2013, AIMS was incorporated into OneSchool, the department’s digital student record database, and the move towards paperless verification requests had begun.

The annual Speech Pathology Australia Conference was held on the Gold Coast during May 2013. This timing corresponded with the first week of the school holidays and large numbers of departmental SLPs attended. Also in this year, a group of regional senior therapists, nurses and teachers planned and organised the TNT conference, providing profession-specific professional development for these groups.

In 2014, the Queensland Government announced the Great Results Guarantee (GRG), (DETE 2014), a four-year funding initiative to improve student outcomes. This program passed funding provided by the Australian Government’s Students First – A Fairer Funding Agreement for Schools initiative (Commonwealth Department of Education and Training 2014) on to Queensland state schools. Many schools across the state used this funding to purchase additional SLT time to support student learning and outcomes.

Again in 2014, regional senior staff organised and ran the TNT conference, successfully bringing together therapists, nurses and teachers for profession-specific professional development. A vote was taken about the frequency with which this event should be run, and a decision was made to make the conference a biennial event. During this year, the Whole School Approach to Supporting Student Learning (DETE 2014) policy was released.

In 2015, a PO6 principal advisor – therapies position was appointed, based in Central Office. This position provides strategic support and leadership for the senior therapists in the department and provides a vital link between therapy services and Central Office.
Also in 2015, and as a result of ongoing international collaboration and relationship building, Professor Laura Justice travelled to Australia to share her professional knowledge and experience with DET staff through the presentation of workshops to the DET SLP team and early years teachers.

This year was the second year of GRG funding to schools. Increased numbers of schools across the state, including primary schools, secondary schools and special schools, used their funds to purchase additional SLT time. More than ever, SLPs are providing services that underpin curriculum provision, often co-planning with key school staff and working in classrooms with teachers to provide support at the whole-class level.

Another milestone of 2015 was that the paperless verification cycle was achieved, which saw all verification requests submitted electronically through AIMS in OneSchool. Advancing Education: An Action Plan for Education in Queensland (DET 2015) was also released in this year detailing a new Autism Hub and Reading Centre (which opened in January 2016), to provide resources, training and advice to parents and schools statewide. A regional senior SLP was also employed in the Reading Centre, recognising the fundamental role that SLPs have in support for students with reading difficulties.

GRG funding to schools continued into its third year, however, its name was changed to Investing for Success (I4S). Numerous schools across the state continued to use these funds to purchase additional SLT time to support students and learning programs.

During the 2016 September school holidays, the TNT conference was held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, once again providing profession-specific professional development for the department’s therapists, nurses and teachers.

In November 2016, the senior advisor – speech language therapy from Metropolitan Region took the work of DET SLPs to the international stage when she presented at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Convention in Philadelphia. This presentation showcased the work of the Metropolitan Region SLP team in developing and implementing processes for gathering and evaluating evidence that inform best practice and identify efficient and effective models for service delivery in an educational context.

This year, 2016, is the golden jubilee of SLT services in education. This eBook celebrates this milestone event and records the journey SLT services in DET have taken over the last 50 years.
From two to many — the leadership legacy

Over the 50-year course of SLT in education, there have been many people who have contributed to the service in big or small ways, all of whom have made a difference. While it is impossible and impractical to name every person, there are some people whose dedicated, strategic, and often tenacious leadership truly shaped and changed the service over a number of years. Many of these key leaders were also leaders in other areas of the speech pathology profession, thus bringing the broader lens of the profession to their departmental roles, and our departmental focus to a broader arena. The history of SLT services in DET is not complete without mention of the following people:

- Marion Wilde, who worked as a speech therapist, a speech therapist-in-charge, supervisor of speech therapy services, (based regionally and in Central Office) and as a principal education officer. Marion has kindly contributed to this book, providing history around the establishment of verification for SLI in the department;

- Meredith Kilminster, whose extensive career included the roles of speech therapist, speech therapist-in-charge, adviser in speech therapy, senior education officer – therapy services, manager therapy services, principal education officer (student services), principal advisor EAP, principal advisor DSSU, member and then chair of the Speech Pathologists’ Board of Queensland and President of the Australian Association of Speech and Hearing (AASH, now Speech Pathology Australia) from 1986 until March 1989. Meredith’s commitment to the speech-language pathology profession and strategic leadership brought about many significant changes to SLT services. Meredith has kindly contributed an article to this eBook, reflecting on her experiences in the department. Meredith’s words help us to remember the significant achievements of SLT services and the contribution that every single SLP makes to our department;

- Kath Vidler, whose roles in the department included speech therapist, speech therapist-in-charge, SLPiC, statewide moderator for ascertainment, and principal advisor – speech-language therapy. Kath also contributed to the leadership of the broader profession in her role as President of Speech Pathology Australia from 2000 to 2002;

- Gaenor Dixon, who is currently the principal advisor – therapies, and whose previous roles have included SLP, SLTA, SLPiC, statewide verifier speech-language impairment and senior advisor disability policy team. Gaenor is the current President of Speech Pathology Australia, and continues the tradition of DET SLT leaders taking their leadership skills beyond our department.

The significant contribution these and other leaders have made, in combination with the commitment and dedication of SLPs across the state, has led us to where we are now. The fanciful dream that one day schools might value SLT services enough to spend their own money to purchase additional time is now our reality. All departmental SLPs can look back on our 50 years with pride and only imagine where we might be in another 50 years.
Recollections of 50 years of speech-language therapy in education

Meredith Kilminster

I have had time since my last day at work on Friday 1 March 2013 to reflect on my career in the Department of Education from my first day as a new graduate speech therapist in 1975.

I found my letter of appointment when I was tidying my filing cabinet — dated 10 January 1975 and signed by the Director-General Mr Guymer. It said:

I have to inform you that it has been approved that you be appointed Speech Therapist on probation, Guidance and Special Education Branch, Department of Education, Brisbane ... with salary at the rate of $294.30 per fortnight.

It instructed me that I had to have a medical examination through the Government Medical Officer and to join an industrial union.

I was also permitted personal expenses to move from Dalby, but the letter reminded me that: ‘This appointment must be effected with the minimum amount of expense to the Department. An unreasonable claim for travelling expenses will be disallowed.’

My first position was at Norman Park State School — the senior speech therapist who offered me the job couldn’t tell me where the suburb was! I don’t think I realised that the profession was still in its infancy in the department when I started — only 40 speech therapists across the state. We did have a limited senior structure, but the support networks were critical for me as a new graduate. So many experienced clinicians willingly provided advice and support.

Some recollections from the different phases of my career:

• As an SLP working in schools — taking responsibility for my case load across local kindergartens, preschools, primary and secondary schools and non-state schools, co-managing the Queensland Articulation Test (Kilminster, Laird & Wilde 1987) research and development, specialist holiday programs (for children with fluency difficulties and for students with hearing impairment), working on the Resource Committee developing reproducible materials and many language programs over the Christmas holidays — and even having the regional director dress as Santa for us! I really enjoyed working with the education team, families, guidance officers, support teachers, class teachers and other SLPs. This was the start of my commitment to the role of mentoring and effective teamwork.

• As a senior SLP — in a region and then at a statewide level. How wonderful it was to see the profession develop and expand throughout the state to become more educationally oriented, and to have the opportunity to visit SLPs in their schools across Queensland. Some highlights include:
  – the establishment of Talkabout — the professional journal for SLPs
  – the development of Exchanges — the video series on typical speech and language development and delay
– establishing the SERDC – Speech Therapy Services to support SLPs statewide
– planning and implementing the regular training and development seminars for SLPs and later all therapists
– the use of satellite technology for professional development through the *Linkup* series of statewide videoconferences
– the joint position with The University of Queensland, which aimed to improve training for undergraduate SLPs in the educational context
– the advocacy to have SLI acknowledged as a disability category
– the growth in the senior structure to support SLPs at a more local level
– extensive interdepartmental collaboration to SLT services for children across government and non-government agencies.

In the senior SLP roles I always felt part of really committed and skilful teams who were forward thinking and focused on what could be done — not what couldn’t be achieved.

- As a senior therapist — to facilitate the transfer of occupational therapists and physiotherapists to the department, to welcome them as part of the education team, and to develop their role and structure in education.

Through supportive supervisors who mentored and challenged me over the years, I had many opportunities to develop and extend my skills — through sharing of profession-specific knowledge and skills, publications, presentations (local, statewide and national), research, financial management, leadership and mentoring roles, and project management and change management roles.

I think the SLP team was ahead of its time in the mentoring it implemented before the term was widely accepted. As Bob Proctor says:

*A mentor is someone who sees more talent and ability within you than you see in yourself, and helps bring it out in you.*

With skilled and talented SLPs, I am sure the profession will continue to grow and develop over the next 50 years in innovative ways that will surprise their predecessors.

**References**


Staying in the game: a personal reflection

Marion Wilde

The significant contribution that SLPs make as part of the educational team in Queensland state schools has been acknowledged and celebrated throughout our 50 years, but staying in the ever-changing main game of education to ensure success for all students has not been without its challenges.

In our milestone 25 years publication I wrote, as the then statewide supervisor of speech therapy services, of the possible challenges ahead, predicting that advocacy for the specialised needs of students with communication disabilities, appropriate and adequate staffing levels, and alignment of services with the curriculum and systemic educational priorities would be significant issues. Indeed the next 10 years saw enormous changes towards inclusive education for all students and a significant focus on appropriate educational provision for students with disability.

In 1993, the Ascertainment Guidelines for Students with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties (Department of Education 1993) were introduced, and applied to students with physical impairment, hearing impairment, vision impairment, intellectual impairment and/or severe multiple impairment, or learning difficulties. By definition, students with specific SLI were not recognised as students with disability, and consequently not covered by policies and guidelines developed to support best practice in schools, and not eligible for additional teacher or teacher aide support. So began a major campaign for the inclusion of SLI as a target category in the ascertainment process to identify the specialised educational needs of students with disability.

The campaign was to last for three years and involved the development of publications and ongoing advocacy through departmental forums. It was an emotional and tough campaign to effect change at a systemic level. While the initial advocacy focused on arguing for SLI as a disability, it evolved into the requirement to identify SLI as a highly specialised, low incidence educational category. The focus therefore was to define SLI in educational terms with reference to the nature of the learning strategies and resources required by schools to address identified needs. An additional key factor was the explicit requirement that no more than 1 per cent of the student population should meet the criteria.

The incidence data had resourcing implications, as any additional teacher or teacher aide allocations required to meet the needs of students meeting SLI criteria would be taken from existing statewide students with disability resourcing. Additionally, the low incidence requirement was intended to avoid schools using the process to seek additional resourcing without consideration of their own internal programs and resources to meet student needs.

I recall, after years of documentation, the formation of a reference committee of various stakeholders, a background paper, an incidence data collection, a statewide consultation process, ongoing debates with colleagues, and extensive questioning by the State Studies Management Committee, the inclusion of SLI as a category in the ascertainment process, and consequent recognition as an EAP disability category in education, was approved (DET 2015). Effecting change had been hard-fought, but today there is no question that students with SLI are supported through systemic processes, namely the EAP, policies and initiatives to identify and support students with disability.
In 1992, my position as statewide supervisor of speech therapy services was relocated into Central Office to be part of the Students with Disabilities Policy Unit. This move provided an excellent opportunity to network with key personnel across all areas in Central Office and collaborate on significant statewide curriculum, policy and systemic initiatives to support student language, learning and literacy. It was an exciting time and helped raise awareness at this level of students with communication disabilities and the potential role of SLPs in language and literacy initiatives in schools.

It was during this period that we gained approval to develop and publish a departmental statewide policy document *Speech-Language Therapy Services in State Schools* (Department of Education 1998). This document required significant consultation with other agencies as well as all internal stakeholders, and was an opportunity to document the target group for services and outline service standards, roles and expectations for SLPs, schools, regions and Central Office. It was a great opportunity to consult widely, critically review feedback and provide a systemic guide for service provision. As a policy document it was scrutinised at the highest level.

While increases in SLP statewide allocations were slow and sporadic, we never gave up. The new challenge became advocating for SLP staffing for both students who met EAP criteria AND those with ‘learning disabilities and difficulties’, for whom there were different resourcing methodologies and expectations for schools.

What the real challenge has been, and will continue to be, is to keep SLT services current and relevant to school and systemic educational priorities, striving to increase the alignment of SLT services with contemporary learning and teaching practices and departmental curriculum expectations, and never giving up on positive schooling experiences and educational outcomes for students with communication disabilities. Well done to all SLPs who have contributed.

**References**


Current state

Current Department of Education and Training speech-language therapy services

Linda Linnan
Senior advisor, speech-language therapy
Darling Downs South West Region

Today in 2016, DET SLPs provide services to all Queensland state schools and early childhood development programs and services. SLT services are provided to enhance the learning and social outcomes of students with speech language communication needs who are experiencing barriers to learning.

Currently DET employs almost 190 full-time equivalent (FTE) SLPs and a further 12.1 FTE supervisory SLPs. In addition, schools use discretionary funding to employ an extra 54 SLPs. DET SLPs work as integral members of the school team to determine the educational needs of students with speech language communication needs or eating and drinking difficulties.
Delivering SLT services within a whole-school approach across the differentiated, focused and intensive levels of support and teaching ensures the SLT service is being responsive to identified individual and school needs.

The focus of these services is to reduce barriers to access and participation by supporting students to develop communication skills essential for learning, literacy and numeracy development, interacting with others and positive self-esteem. Local processes determine which students will be prioritised for services.

The roles and responsibilities of SLPs working in DET have evolved over the years. Delivery and implementation of departmental SLT services are guided by the systemic framework documents *Speech-Language Therapy Services in States Schools – Revised Edition 2010* (DET 2010) and *Priorities in Speech-Language Therapy in State Schools – Revised Edition 2012* (DETE 2012), which were developed and revised in response to the changing face of the DET SLT service.

The development, coordination and provision of evidence-based resources and interventions are vital to providing an efficient, effective and quality service. Services embedded within a whole-school approach have led to the development of a range of innovative and creative resources. SLPs share these best practice initiatives through a range of mediums including departmental edStudios, OneChannel sessions and presentations at the biennial TNT conference.

The rapid development of new technologies has provided enhanced opportunities for innovative service delivery to rural and remote communities. DET SLPs are delivering regular, consistent, evidence-based therapy services face to face via telepractice. Service delivery through this type of modality will continue to grow with the advent of new and improved technologies.

Current DET SLT services are educationally relevant, evidence-based, innovative and responsive to individual student and school needs. The drive, dedication and professionalism of every SLP who has ever worked for the department will continue to inform service delivery that enhances the learning and social outcomes of students with speech language and communication needs now, and into the future.

References


Resources

SLPs in DET are an innovative and creative group of professionals. They are regularly developing, evaluating, reviewing and revising resources to enhance their services to schools and students in the pursuit of maximising educational outcomes. Many of these more recently developed resources target the differentiated level of support, in schools and are testimony to the shift in SLT service delivery models and options towards the whole-school approach. Following are just a few of these valuable resources.

Programs for Oral Language and Literacy in the Early Years (POLLEY)

Diane Smith and Yvette Arundel
Speech-language pathologists
Park Avenue State School

POLLEY (DETE 2013) is the umbrella name for two Central Queensland Region class-based programs targeting metalinguistic skills (Prep Metalinguistic Awareness Program (PMAP), Department of Education 2000) and oral language skills (Oral Language for Early Years (OLEY), DET 2009). POLLEY arose out of the need to develop a resource to fit with the DET's Recognition and Response framework for intervention (DET 2010). At the time, PMAP and OLEY targeted Layer 1 of this framework – Explicit Universal Teaching. Screeners were developed for each of these programs to assist with identification of students requiring additional support, that is, Layer 2 – Targeted Teaching, and with planning for individualised support needs and measuring outcomes of the programs. As the programs were rolled out across Central Queensland Region, additional resources such as the Follow-up Intervention programs and POLLEY training resources were added to support the programs. POLLEY has evolved as a collaborative project between Gladstone, Rockhampton, Emerald and Longreach SLPs, with support also provided by class teachers and other specialist staff such as Support Teachers: Literacy and Numeracy.

The evolution of POLLEY

2000 – The PMAP was developed by Gladstone SLPs. Successful outcomes were achieved in the initial trial, and a study using a control group yielded results showing improved outcomes gained using a structured program versus incidental teaching. PMAP won a DET Showcase Award for Excellence in the following year and was run successfully in many Central Queensland schools.

2008 – A decision was made to develop and trial a structured oral language program to enhance students’ oral language skills more effectively than an incidental teaching approach.

2009 – OLEY was written and trialled with positive outcomes for students. Rockhampton SLPs presented OLEY at the department’s Training and Development Seminar (now called the TNT conference).

2010 – The Follow-up Intervention programs and screeners were developed and regional training was held in Emerald, Rockhampton and Gladstone.
2011 – With the new Australian Curriculum, more complex skills were required, and PMAP was revised to become the current Prep Metalinguistic Awareness Program – 2nd Edition (PMAP-2) (DET 2011).

2012 – Changes were made to the OLEY screener and some resources and activities based on feedback from schools.

2013 – Rockhampton SLPs presented POLLEY at the 2013 TNT conference. A number of schools in the region (and across the state) are implementing the program or parts of the program independently, with SLP consultation and support.

2016 – An exciting new program, Program for Oral Narrative Development (POND) (DET 2016), structured in the same way as the POLLEY programs, was developed and trialled with SLPs in Rockhampton for presentation at the 2016 TNT conference.

POLLEY has been a great collaborative experience for our team, and it has been a privilege to use it in classrooms with students, teachers, parents and volunteers. It has also been exciting to witness the positive outcomes for students and widespread use of the program.

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Department of Education 2000, Prep Metalinguistic Awareness Program (PMAP), The State of Queensland (Department of Education), Brisbane.

DET 2009, Oral Language for Early Years (OLEY), The State of Queensland (Department of Education and Training), Brisbane.


DETE 2013, Programs for Oral Language and Literacy in the Early Years (POLLEY), The State of Queensland (Department of Education, Training and Employment), Brisbane.

DET 2016, Program for Oral Narrative Development (POND), The State of Queensland (Department of Education and Training), Brisbane.
Read It Again – FoundationQ!

Jenny Peach
Senior advisor, speech-language therapy
Metropolitan Region

Read It Again – FoundationQ! (DETE 2013) is an authorised adaptation of Read It Again – PreK! (Justice & McGinty 2009), a program idea from the United States. Read It Again (RIA) is designed to strengthen students’ early foundations in language and literacy, and enhance teachers’ skills in shared book reading and differentiated instruction. RIA is based on high-quality research, has evidence to support its efficacy and effectiveness, and considers many aspects of language and literacy within a sound pedagogical framework.

FoundationQ! was launched in DETE by Metropolitan Region in 2013, and in that year alone was taken up by approximately 70 schools. The 2014 school year began and three weeks into Term 1, DETE announced its Great Results Guarantee initiative, providing discretionary funding to schools to develop and implement evidence-based interventions that respond to the needs of students and return a high yield in terms of improved educational outcomes.

As they say, timing is everything and for us the timing could not have been better. Many of the schools implementing FoundationQ! purchased additional SLT time to support class teachers to incorporate the targeted objectives and differentiation strategies into their teaching practice. This created opportunities for increased professional collaboration and for SLPs to showcase the skills and knowledge they bring to the teaching and learning environment. This model of service delivery, incorporating coaching as a natural extension of the consultative and collaborative role of SLPs, is now highly valued and widely used by schools.

The partnership between Metropolitan Region and Professor Justice that developed from the writing of FoundationQ! led to Professor Justice travelling to Brisbane in September 2015 to present workshops for the DET SLP team and early years teachers. These workshops were very well received and further enhanced the collaboration between SLPs and class teachers.

FoundationQ! continues to go from strength to strength, and is now implemented in many state and independent schools across Queensland, and in other Australian states and territories.

In 2016, Read It Again – KindergartenQ! (DET 2016), developed for use in Australian pre-foundation year programs as a supplementary resource for educators to foster children’s language and literacy development, was launched. KindergartenQ! supports the transition from kindergarten to Prep and is suitable for implementation in some Prep year programs, and in early childhood education centres.

References


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**Speaking Promotes Education And Knowledge (SPEAK) app**

Jo Adsett  
Senior advisor, speech-language therapy  
South East Region

Ros Scandar  
Speech-language pathologist-in-charge  
South East Region

The **SPEAK (Speaking Promotes Education And Knowledge)** app (DETE 2014) was launched in 2014 and was developed by DETE as a joint initiative with Queensland Health and Redland City Council to help develop children’s speaking and listening abilities. The information and activities were developed in collaboration with SLPs, educators and health professionals. **SPEAK** provides fun, free activities, ideas and information for parents, carers and educators to support and nurture oral language development in children from 0–6 years of age. The **SPEAK** app is available for free download from the iTunes store and Google Play.

**References**

Structured Tier Two Instruction of Vocabulary Experiences (STRIVE)

Jo Adsett
Senior advisor, speech-language therapy
South East Region

Ros Scandar
Speech-language pathologist-in-charge
South East Region

The STRIVE (DET 2010) project commenced in 2010 as a response to schools seeking support for reading comprehension as part of the National Partnerships funding. It recognises the importance of the explicit teaching of vocabulary in supporting reading comprehension. STRIVE is a framework for the robust instruction of vocabulary based on the work of Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2002). DET SLPs Caroline Masarotto, Tania Lawrence, Catherine Nixon and Janice Zee have all had roles in developing the framework and early support materials. STRIVE is designed as a framework for use at the Tier 1 whole-class or differentiated teaching level of instruction, with a number of resources being developed for inclusion in DET’s Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) resource bank. Originally trialled in some Logan schools, the framework, resources, coaching and training materials are now used throughout the South East Region and across the state in primary and secondary schools. Schools implementing STRIVE have reported positive outcomes for students’ use of vocabulary and reading comprehension.

References

DET 2010, Structured Tier Two Instruction of Vocabulary Experiences (STRIVE), The State of Queensland (Department of Education and Training), Brisbane.
Support A Talker (SAT)

Jo Adsett
Senior advisor, speech-language therapy
South East Region

Ros Scandar
Speech-language pathologist-in-charge
South East Region

Support A Talker (SAT) (DETA 2006) is a Tier 2 oral language program for preschool, Prep, Year 1 and Year 2 students that was developed in the Logan/Gold Coast area by school-based SLPs. The aim of SAT is to provide children experiencing language delays with the opportunity to interact regularly with a supportive adult to enhance the child’s language learning. Volunteer tutors and teacher aides facilitate oral language practice through games and activities.

References
Talkabout – a resource for professional development and sharing for speech-language pathologists

Suzanne Ennis
Senior advisor, speech-language therapy
North Coast Region

All those who have contributed to, and read, Talkabout are proud to include a tribute to this unique professional development and professional sharing resource in our 2016 celebrations of 50 years of SLT in education.

Talkabout was first conceptualised in 1987 and first published in April 1988, specifically for the speech therapists in the Queensland Department of Education. The original editorial committee of four people was Marion Wilde, Mary-Anne Schostakowski, Ann Johnston and Adele Wallis.

Talkabout has always been a valued professional development resource for SLPs in our department. DSSU and its various prior incarnations (LIU, LISC, and Guidance and Special Education Services) provided statewide support and supervision for its publication and editors. The publication of Talkabout, and in particular the editorial function, became part of the capacity-building and professional development provided to the SLPs across the state.

Some of the topics covered in Talkabout include autism spectrum disorder, whole-school approaches, eating and drinking, transitions, data-driven practice, semantics, capacity-building, speech, syndromes, SLI, literacy and numeracy, perspectives on working with Indigenous students, English as a second language, social skills and outcomes.

From 1988 to 2010, three publications per year were produced, and from 2011 until the present, there have been two editions per year. In 2012, Talkabout celebrated 25 years, with both editions including fabulous articles from a wide range of SLPs remembering its beginnings and confirming how beneficial it continues to be.

Until 2012, various SLTAs at DSSU took on the role of editor of Talkabout and coordinated the Talkabout committee, which comprised SLPs drawn from every region across the state. With the regionalisation of DSSU services in 2012, the SLTA positions were changed to regional SLP positions and the principal advisor – SLT role was discontinued. The closure of DSSU in the middle of the production of the 25-year commemorative editions seemed as if it would jeopardise the future of Talkabout as a resource for speech pathologists in the department. The then Talkabout editor and SLTA, Bryan Ward, returned to his SLP position in North Coast Region, and some unused wages were used to provide the necessary time to complete the editions that were planned, and that still needed laying out and editing. Since then, Bryan has continued as editor of Talkabout with an allocation of one day per fortnight from the North Coast SLP team. The essential statewide Talkabout committee sources articles and decides on future topics by collaborating via teleconferences and iConnect. Supervision and approval for the final publication of each edition is provided by the regional senior SLT team in North Coast Region and a member of the SLT SLN.
Talkabout editions from 1998 to the present are saved online in an edStudio called Talkabout on DET’s the Learning Place. In the past, Talkabout publications were available externally through the DSSU Professional Learning Community; however, a new home was required in 2012. Current versions are produced in digital format only and are only accessible to DET employees. External contributors are sent digital copies of the publication containing their article.

Talkabout has maintained its purpose and focus for 29 years. It has modernised, and certainly the technology available today has enhanced its production and the collaboration opportunities for the committee. It continues to be a valued professional development resource for SLPs across the state. In addition, it provides opportunities for SLPs to share their knowledge, publish articles, and work collaboratively with others outside our department or with school teams. It provides educationally relevant, current, innovative and useful information and professional support to SLPs across the state.

Thank you to all the foundation, past and present committee members, editors, supervisors and contributors. It is hoped that Talkabout can continue in its current format into the future to celebrate its own 50 years milestone in 2038.

Departmental staff can access the Talkabout edStudio through the Learning Place, via the following link: https://staff.learningplace.eq.edu.au/lp/pages/default.aspx?pid=1160504
Future directions

The next 50 years of speech-language therapy services in the Department of Education and Training

Gaenor Dixon
Principal advisor, therapies
Department of Education and Training

I am honoured to be writing this piece among a group of colleagues who have contributed to the longevity of the service. I would like to acknowledge the people who were, and those who continue to be, the innovators and drivers of the SLT service — all too numerous to mention. I want to acknowledge all the SLPs who have worked within the department over the 50 years, and those who will work with us in the next 50. When you look at the lives on which you have had an impact, those students whose access and participation in education, and whose lives as a result of that accessible education, have been better, your work is vital.

50 years in education? Where will we be in 50 years? Will we have been replaced by artificial intelligence? Will people even need communication anymore?

All current predictions do not suggest that SLT is in any immediate danger due to the development of bots and artificial intelligence. Although how we work will look different in 50 years, language competence will continue to be the keystone to learning and thriving.

The future will demand creative and critical thinking, innovation and communication of those ideas. The future will have fewer unskilled jobs and will require skilled workers who are flexible and innovative. Will reading and writing be required in the future? I did come across a school of thought that suggested it may not be. I find that challenging. However, regardless of mode, literate communication will still be vital to a person’s functioning in life, and numeracy, which we know is reliant on language competence, will still be required. SLT services therefore will continue to be an integral part of education.

Speech Pathology Australia, in the document Speech Pathology 2030 – Making Futures Happen (Speech Pathology Australia 2016) outlines a vision for the future which includes:

- communication accessible communities
- access for all
- timely services across the lifespan
- clients and communities driving service delivery
- skilled and confident families and carers (and for us in education, teachers)
- collaborative professional partnerships
- quality services
- innovation and continual pursuit of knowledge
- a diverse and dynamic workforce.
This vision of the future aligns with the department’s strategic vision, and Queensland’s vision for the future. As a service, let’s take the opportunity to reflect on what aspects of our work are supporting us to achieve this vision and where we may need to prioritise and focus our efforts to move us closer to achieving this vision.

To ensure our profession is able to serve its vital role in 50 years time, we need to demonstrate many of the skills that we think will be taught in schools in 50 years. We need to be creative and innovative, while ensuring that where it does not exist, we collect the evidence to determine that what we do is effective, and let go of activities that may not be effective. We need to be far-thinking in considering the scope of our practice — what does communicative competence mean? What will communicative competence mean in 50 years? What barriers to competence do we need to address? What barriers to participation do we need to overcome?

I have great confidence that we can rise to the challenges of the next 50 years, just as we have risen to the challenges of the last 50. Our work in the first 50 years has created a network and service of which I am proud to be a member. Those innovations have continued to develop over time.

As SLPs, our work supports each and every person to:

- communicate effectively
- eat and drink, balancing enjoyment with safety
- connect and belong
- exercise their right to self-determination
- fulfil their day-to-day needs
- participate in, and contribute to, their community
- learn to their full potential
- expand and achieve their life choices. (Speech Pathology Australia 2016).

This work was true of us 50 years ago, this work is true of us today, and this work will continue to be true of us into the future.

References

Linda Estraviz
Senior speech-language pathologist
Tewantin State School

I started with the Department of Education at Tewantin in July 1986. Initially I worked across two regions — two days at Nambour Special Education Development Centre (which was in Brisbane North Region in 1986) and three days at Tewantin State School (which was in the Wide Bay Region). I had begun my career as a speech pathologist in New South Wales and became a speech therapist when I joined the department in 1986. These days we are speech-language pathologists to emphasise our role in language intervention and support.

There have been some even greater changes over the years. Back then, I wrote my reports by hand — with a piece of carbon under the paper so that there was a copy. Then an electric typewriter arrived at the Special Education Unit and I used some of my grant money to pay an hourly rate to a teacher aide who typed up the reports for me. I think carbon paper was still involved although the photocopier arrived about the same time as the typewriter. (Prior to that we used a Gestetner stencil duplicator!)

I also spent many hours drawing, cutting out magazine pictures and colouring in. Thank goodness for printers and photocopiers — I was getting sick of arguing with students: ‘It is a car/frog/dog/person/whatever.’ (I can’t draw for peanuts!) When I first began work at Tewantin there were referrals from the local kindergartens, childcare centres and private schools. My colleague, Sue Walsh, was instrumental in establishing a Queensland Health SPL position at Noosa Child Health Centre, and it was great to have a Queensland Health colleague supporting the kindergartens and childcare centres.

Once a fortnight on a Friday afternoon we had a network meeting in Gympie. For some of these meetings I would collect a hire car in Noosa (!!) and take a car-load of learning support staff, special education staff and guidance staff from around Tewantin and Cooroy to those meetings. I received double the professional development dose on these days — in the car and then at the meeting! Now networking at a regional level with a range of professionals is done with the click of a mouse.

So why am I still here? Most importantly it is because of my SLP colleagues. At my initial interview, Meredith Kilminster convinced me I could do the job and make the switch from working with adults to working with students in schools. On my first day of work, thanks to Gympie West SLP, Sue Walsh, and SLPiC, Gill Lovie, I realised I would be supported by some pretty special SLP colleagues, so maybe I could do the job. Today I would have to say that the SLPs I have worked with in DET have been inspirational and are definitely the reason I’m still in the job. I was the sole SLP at the Tewantin base for way too long. The day Chris Lukin took a position with DET and arrived at Tewantin was a huge highlight for me. An SLP colleague on site — yippee!

Finally, I just love working in schools. I still enjoy working with students and teachers and I love learning about education, and watching how political decisions evolve into classroom practice.
What would you do if you started your first day as a new graduate with a filing cabinet containing school files and long lists of students, all handwritten on paper, a wooden dolls’ house, some blocks, miscellaneous toys and of course the infamous boy and girl mannequins of the Peabody Language Development Kit (Dunn & Smith 1965)? Be creative, that’s what! Working creatively in an educational setting is something I have enjoyed since day one in August 1985. I had the added bonus, in this era, of working a monthly Friday afternoon as part of the Resource Committee Design Group — thank goodness for the old red, yellow, blue and green Speech Therapy Resource Folders (Department of Education 1987). Now, of course, we have access to so many wonderful resources that have been created and shared, not to mention all the tools of technology.

Working with other SLPs has also been a highlight for me — particularly during the days of the old West Moreton District Intensive Preschool Language Programs — a recipe for Year 1 readiness! Ingredients: three SLPs, 15 identified students from schools across the Ipswich district, and a regular block of time, 12 noon to 2.30 pm every day for three weeks! Now schools have the capacity to improve student communication skills in Prep with programs such as OLEY (DET 2009) and PMAP-2 (DET 2011).

The school environment has provided many positive opportunities across the years to work collaboratively with school staff and share resources and skills. There is always something special about seeing students engaged and actively enjoying activities that build their communication competence.

References

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DET 2009, Oral Language for Early Years (OLEY), The State of Queensland (Department of Education and Training), Brisbane.

Gill Lovie
Speech-language pathologist
Serviceton South State School

I commenced work as a speech therapist in the Queensland Department of Education in Maryborough in October 1985, where I worked as the regional speech therapist-in-charge until April 1987. After a two-year break overseas, I rejoined the department and was based at Kenmore South Preschool, attached to Kenmore District Office. Together with another speech therapist, we provided services to approximately 25 primary schools — a cluster of schools from Upper Brookfield State School to Toowong State School and a cluster of schools in the Goodna area (we had a secondary base at Goodna State School). We also provided services to Catholic primary schools in our catchment.

Parents brought their children to one of the bases for therapy and schools received a visit about once a year. Many referrals came via school nurses. Prior to the age of computers, the internet and laminators, I spent a lot of time looking through magazines for pictures, colouring, contacting, and even printing worksheets on a Gestetner stencil duplicator! Reports were handwritten and usually one page long, and data was collated on huge sheets of butcher’s paper. Professional development for teachers was presented using overhead projectors on handwritten overhead transparencies.

I have had the benefit of working in a range of settings and have been involved in a variety of projects over the years at a regional and state level, including the early days of Talkabout, the departmental publication produced by SLPs for SLPs. Four of us would gather with our red pens, share out the articles and spend the afternoon reading and editing (and chatting — which SLPs do so well!).

The variety of experiences, the opportunity to meet and work with a wonderful and committed group of colleagues, and my inherent belief that access to SLT services is a right not a privilege — these are the reasons I am still working in education.

References
Fiona Maher  
A/Senior advisor, speech-language therapy  
Far North Queensland Region

I started work with the Department of Education in 1986 straight after graduating from university in Sydney. Much has changed over the years. Back then, we operated using more of a traditional model, where we visited schools just to do assessments (except for special schools). Parents brought children to our base location weekly or fortnightly for speech therapy. Teacher aide support was reserved for those few children who, for various reasons, were not able to attend therapy sessions at our base.

However, our service delivery was starting to change — in the late 80s in Rockhampton, I was involved in the creation of a whole-class oral language program called *Looking at Learning Together*. This was the precursor to the OLEY program (DET 2009), and that was a very exciting project.

Back then there were far fewer resources than we have today, although the wonderful blue, yellow, red and green *Speech Therapy Resource Folders* (Department of Education 1987) were the envy of my university friends, none of whom ended up making the trek from Sydney to work in our department.

I think I have stayed working in the department for many reasons, but mostly because I have always appreciated the opportunity to provide a service to children who would not otherwise be able to receive any SLT input. I have thoroughly enjoyed working in different ways within the school system over many, many years and using what we now call the whole-school approach. I’ve always enjoyed the catch-up office time that the school holidays afforded me. And, as I became a parent, the ability to work part-time and have the school holidays off to be with my school-aged children has been an absolute godsend. At times I find I am also looking after the children of some of my non-departmental SLP colleagues who don’t have such flexible and family-friendly workplaces!

One of my early memories was being a ‘flying SLP’ in the late 80s, doing day trips from Rockhampton to the mining towns of Middlemount, Dysart and Moranbah. That only lasted for a short period and then we were back to the long drive out and back! My most precious memories involve my time in the Torres Strait, firstly spending five days on remote Darnley Island to run a smooth speech program in the late 90s with another SLP (Michelle Foley, nee Picchetti), and then an 18-month period from 2000 to 2002 when I was the ‘fly in, fly out’ DET SLP for the whole of the Torres Strait and the tip of Cape York. Having a father who was a recreational pilot, I grew up flying in small planes, so I thoroughly enjoyed each and every flight to the many islands to which I was providing a service. The visits to these beautiful and very special places and the people with whom I had the privilege to work are memories that I’ll treasure forever.

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Monday 5 January 1981 was my first day on the job as the first-ever speech therapist based at Gladstone Special School. Any thoughts I had of celebrity status were quickly dispelled when I arrived on that day to a locked gate and an empty school (it was school holidays). After knocking on a few doors, I eventually tracked down the principal who escorted me to my also empty therapy room (no resources had arrived yet). There I sat for three weeks waiting for someone — anyone — to turn up. Time wasn’t wasted though — I realised very quickly that I needed at least an articulation test if I was to do any work at all, and so set about drawing and colouring pictures — no computers or clip art in those days.

Much has changed since my days in Gladstone. My case load then was half of Central Queensland, I was the only speech therapist within hundreds of miles, and we had just one senior therapist for the state. In the 35 years that have passed, our title has changed, case loads have become more manageable, our work has become increasingly varied and complex, and we now have a statewide team of regional senior SLPs.

Many things have remain unchanged though, and these are the things of which we can be most proud — our commitment to research and evidence-based professional practice, our understanding of the role we play in creating language-rich teaching and learning environments, and our drive to always do things better.

As I look back over my career in the department, what I value most are the friendships I have made along the way. I work today with people I have known for virtually all of my adult life — how special is that?
Bernadette Pinchin
Speech-language pathologist
Laidley District State School

I started work as a speech therapist in the Department of Education in 1991, which coincided with the 25 years of speech therapy in education celebrations. After a break of a few years, I returned in 1997. I have been around long enough to remember when there was no EAP category of SLI (DET 2015), when attendance at the TNT conference (or TADS as we knew it) was free, and when we wrote handwritten reports! I have seen a number of departmental restructures which saw us move from regions, to school support centres, to districts and back to regions.

A lot has changed, but a lot is still the same — we are continually challenging ourselves to provide the best support that we can, being innovative and proactive in the way we work, because making a difference to children’s lives is what it is all about at the end of the day.

One of my fondest memories was when each base was given a set of resources — it was like all our Christmases had come at once! These were the iconic ‘coloured folders’ ([Speech Therapy Resource Folders](#), Department of Education 1987), the grey suitcase of promotional items ([Therapy Services Resource Kit](#), Department of Education 1991) that could be used to set up a display or run an in-service, and the set of coloured suitcases called [Exchanges](#) (Department of Education 1990) that provided videos and booklets on a range of topics that could be used for the provision of professional development! These resources were the pride of the base and were amazing tools developed by a small band of dedicated SLPs.

I have been very fortunate to have worked with some absolutely amazing people. Working in a team of SLPs who are so generous in sharing their knowledge and expertise, and their friendship, is a definite highlight.

References


Pam Pitt
Speech-language pathologist
Gympie West State School

It feels like it was not so long ago that I was finishing university, graduating and starting work with the Queensland Department of Education in Ipswich. Yet on the other hand, I look back at my experiences and all the changes, and it seems like a lifetime ago.

I started work in Ipswich with a fellow new graduate, Joanna Henderson. Being based together allowed for great support and collegial discussions when finding our speech therapy feet. I then worked in Inala for a short while before moving to Gympie in 1993. Then I was the sole speech therapist at the Gympie School Support Centre and I serviced all the schools in the area. Now there is a team of SLPs who share the office and the case load.

Before my move to Gympie, all reports were handwritten and communication was via telephone (landline) and mail. We had monthly regional speech therapy meetings and local staff meetings. After 1993, computers were becoming more widely used and emailing, faxing, scanning and photocopying soon became everyday activities.

I remember we used to fill in a pink or blue card for every student we supported, and then sorted, counted, re-sorted and re-counted all the pink and blue cards to complete our annual statistics. Now it is so much easier with databases and spreadsheets that automatically do the mathematical calculations for us — if you enter the data correctly!

Professionally, there have always been new research, ideas, programs and processes being introduced, including the department’s recognition of the EAP category of SLI (DET 2015). However, the changes within the department and within the profession have all been made so much easier by the supportive network of regional and statewide SLPs, SLPiCs, and the senior advisors, speech-language therapy.

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Sue Pryde-Walsh
Senior speech-language pathologist
Maroochydore State School

I started work for the Queensland Department of Education in 1985 after graduating from The University of Queensland in the first of the three and a half year Bachelor of Speech Therapy courses. I was interviewed by Meredith Kilminster and Betty Laird, who came to the university to conduct interviews. It was a fairly informal interview, more like a friendly discussion. I was lucky enough to secure my first preference of location in Gympie.

Back then, speech therapists were based in district offices and we had a wonderful team at the Gympie District Guidance Office, with Richard Cameron in charge and Nello Raciti as second in charge. Gill Lovie was my speech therapist-in-charge based in Maryborough, and was also my nearest (geographically) speech therapy colleague. I attended an induction program in Brisbane and we occasionally had regional speech therapy meetings in Maryborough. At the end of 1985, a new position was created at Tewantin and Linda Estraviz started in that position. It was wonderful having a colleague so close and we got busy organising resources for her new clinic using the Gestetner stencil duplicator to run off our resources, the smell of which was like some exotic alcoholic spirit.

I really enjoyed my first two years of work and was inspired by Richard Cameron's belief in collaborative consultation as the way forward for guidance officers and speech therapists in education. We got busy learning about James Macdonald's Ecological Communication (ECO) model of parent–child interaction (Macdonald & Mitchell 2001) from Elaine Zendler and Kathi Abbs (Department of Education speech therapists).

We trialled a range of parent education and teacher education programs and submitted an abstract to present a paper at the AASH national conference in Canberra in 1987. We were terribly excited, and very nervous, when we heard the paper had been accepted, and Gill, Linda and I set off on a road trip to Canberra in Gill Lovie’s little blue Corolla. That was a road trip to remember — we shared accommodation with some Sydney speech therapists to save money, and Linda and another speech therapist even shared a double bed to minimise costs! It was an exciting time in the department, moving from the traditional one-to-one therapy style to other forms of service delivery.

I then spent time working in Canada in a Toronto Children's Hospital and doing a contract for British Columbia Education Board. One day, while at home in the trailer I shared with a teacher colleague in Nakusp, British Columbia, I was surprised to receive a phone call from Meredith Kilminster. Meredith asked if I was interested in doing Linda Estraviz’s maternity leave locum at Tewantin. How could I resist? It was perfect, close to home and right near Noosa! I couldn’t think of a better job. It didn’t really phase me that I was the only SLP for the 26 schools in the area.

However, I don’t have as fond memories of that first block of Christmas holidays when I had no recreation leave owing so I could only take off the compulsory closure days. That was a long, lonely and boring six weeks in the office of the Tewantin Preschool, which had been converted to my speech therapy base. It was made worse by the preschool's psychotic pet rabbit, which I was left in charge of feeding for the holidays, as it would randomly attack me!
Another not-so-fond memory is of the time in 1995 when we finished a week-long intensive stuttering program in Nambour and I had to ring Meredith Kilminster to tell her we had lost six very expensive fluency counters. We had just finished five long days of intensive intervention with six students and we took them out for lunch at Sizzlers in Maroochydore as per their wishes for a celebration. Prior to lunch, we had hurriedly put the fluency counters back in the boxes to post back to Brisbane. The cleaner had heard the garbage truck coming and quickly rushed a pile of rubbish he’d seen lying around out to the truck. A few hours later when we discovered what had happened, I fronted up to the Nambour dump and was told ‘good luck’!

Many things have changed in the department since then, including working conditions, professional support, the nature of teaching and schools, the experiences of children and the styles of service delivery for SLT.

What hasn’t changed is the direct access and support one is able to provide to teachers and students, particularly the students who would never receive a service outside of school. This enables an understanding of the student’s needs, and a capacity to change the school and sometimes the home environment for these students to help them experience improved success in communication and learning.

I have worked in several other positions throughout my SLT career, but have loved working most with students in education as I am constantly stimulated by the variety. I strongly believe working in schools and working closely with teachers and parents enables the greatest difference to be made for students with special needs in communication.

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Roslyn Scandar  
Speech-language pathologist-in-charge  
South East Region

As I look back over the past 25 years, there has been a number of changes, restructures and new priorities and initiatives — National Partnerships, Great Results Guarantee and Investing for Success. These new funding sources have resulted in schools purchasing additional SLT time to address their individual needs. In meeting the changing needs of schools, the SLT service has moved away from a more medical model of service delivery, focusing on assessment and intervention, to a focus on education, educational outcomes and the provision of services through a whole-school approach. It has been exciting to be part of this growth in service provision and to witness the number of SLPs employed growing exponentially. What is particularly exciting about the purchase of extra SLT time by an increasing number of schools is the recognition by this investment of the value that SLPs can, and do, add to the education of students.

What has not changed at all is the dedication of the SLPs I have been surrounded by throughout the years. Without exception I have been fortunate to work with other dedicated colleagues who are driven to provide the best service possible for students, and who believe we can make a difference in the lives of those students.
Ann Tucker  
Senior speech-language pathologist  
Bray Park State School

When I first graduated from The University of Queensland and worked full-time as a speech therapist at a special school, I knew I had found my 'niche'. Working in schools, for me, helped provide a meaningful context and practical foundation for what I had learned during my degree. In 1986, when DET assumed responsibility for the Endeavour Foundation special school at which I was working, I became a Queensland Government employee. Since that time, there have been many, many changes in the role, not least of which was the name change, which emphasised the language as well as the speech component of our work. When I first started working, I was a ‘speech therapist’ and now I am a ‘speech-language pathologist’. I wonder what I will be called when I retire … a ‘communicologist’? Who knows?

I would like to highlight just some of the changes I have observed over the past 30 years or so. Do you recognise any of the obscure SLT related items found in the ‘dungeons’ at one of our regional offices? Hopefully this article will provide an opportunity for some of you to pause, reflect and have an ‘I remember when …’ moment. For others, please humour your colleagues by using your best active listening skills, and discover the history of SLPs working for DET.

Technology

Certainly some of the biggest changes which have occurred can be linked to technology, and probably the biggest has been the use of computers and the internet.

I remember very clearly handwriting (or using a typewriter) to write reports with carbon paper in between pieces of paper to create copies for parents. Sometimes we splurged, and used three pieces of paper with two carbon sheets between them, in order to get two additional copies. Later, SLPs became so excited when schools allowed access to photocopiers to allow reports to be copied. Gone were the days of getting sore hands from pressing down through the paper to get a carbon copy for your own files. With the development of computers, we could write and then immediately print out reports, and with the advent of the internet and email, reports can now be sent electronically to key contact people at schools and be placed into the OneSchool application for all appropriate people to see.

When computers first became available, I clearly remember writing electronic progress notes. The SLP servicing the school after me stated how impressed she was — and how much better it was than the handwritten notes she was used to. And now, instead of black line or purple spirit duplicated pictures, we have easy access to the most amazing and engaging digital resources, including all those iPad apps which are now a standard part of the intervention toolbox for most SLPs.

The internet has also brought about some of the biggest changes in our job, in terms of internal departmental communication (within school teams, professional networks and with parents), as well as the ability to access an infinite amount of profession-specific information and resources. Now when our internet connection is slow or non-existent, it impacts on our whole work day. We feel totally disconnected — as if we are missing out on...
some valuable communication with someone. Not being able to access stored information, reports and resources is extremely frustrating.

In the 'olden days', communication between SLPs and key stakeholders was no less important than it is now — it just occurred in different ways. Many younger SLPs would find it inconceivable that our communication was limited solely to the telephone or the postal system. I remember my first training on the use of emails and how much all the trainees were amazed by the ease and speed of the system — which we all now take for granted.

How many of you remember sending in pages and pages of written materials for SLI ascertainments (the process that existed prior to verification)? Now, with internet access and digital storage of information, SLI verifications are submitted online. Think of how many trees we have saved!!!

Technology has changed, and will continue to change our work in many, many ways, including:

- the way we collect and analyse information on students — moving from audio cassettes to digital recorders, video cassettes to digital cameras and iPads, and online access assessment and analysis tools
- our access to millions of different electronic and online resources across numerous domains
- our access to current research and outcomes on intervention strategies, assessments and clinical methodologies.

Speech and language intervention

In the area of speech sound intervention, 30 years ago there was minimal information on differential diagnosis. I remember attending a professional development event where it was reported there was insufficient evidence to support diagnosing a child with childhood apraxia of speech (CAS). This is particularly interesting given that, although rare, CAS is now acknowledged by DET under the verification category for SLI.

Back then, speech sound intervention tended to focus on articulation therapy, with the occasional work on phonological rules through minimal pairs. Later, there was training in the first version of the *Nuffield Dyspraxia Program* (Nuffield Hearing and Speech Centre 1985), which at that time included sequencing of non-speech, oro-motor movements (which, interestingly, is not best practice anymore!). At one stage, we also had training in one of the few phonology-based programs — the Metaphon therapy approach (Dean & Howell 1986). Now we are spoiled for choice! We have a more solid research base for differential diagnosis of speech sound disorders and the type and dose of intervention required to make improvements. We are also more aware of the impact of speech sound disorders and phonological awareness on educational outcomes.

Over my working life, I have usually seen students make improvements with the older types of approaches; however, now I must share my excitement with some of the newer phonological approaches. Just recently I used the Multiple Oppositions approach (Williams 2006) with a Prep-aged student and his family. The student had a severe phonological disorder where nearly all sounds collapsed to /g/. Within a term of intervention, he was intelligible to school staff! This shows that we now have access to some very powerful approaches that can turn around students’ skills in relatively short time frames,
which is great in terms of educational outcomes and makes a real difference to these children’s lives!!

Similarly, language assessment and intervention have also evolved to become even more educationally and communicatively relevant. In the 1980s, while working with young children who had very significant language delays, I turned to some inspiring work by two departmental speech therapists (as we were called back then), Kathi Abbs and Elaine Zendler. These speech therapists were adapting James Macdonald’s ECO program (Macdonald & Mitchell 2001) to support parents of young children in their communicative interactions. It was very inspiring work, much of which is consistent with the child-centred approaches currently used with parents by early childhood educators and special school staff, for example, the Hanen programs including It Takes Two to Talk (Pepper & Weitzman 2004) and More Than Words (Sussman 2012), the Intensive Interaction approach (Nind & Hewett 1994) and the DIR Floortime approach (Greenspan & Wieder 2009).

Language assessment and support for older students has also changed greatly. When I first started, our focus often was directed to supporting students’ grammatical development. We felt we were enlightened when we extended our focus to semantics and social use of language. In special schools, I often ran whole-class language programs, modelling various augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) techniques or targeting basic communicative social skills. I remember running my first Year 1 whole-class program targeting social language skills. This was over 20 years ago when the usual intervention context was withdrawal where the student was withdrawn from the classroom and worked with individually by the speech therapist. Implementing a whole-class program was therefore a big step forward for me and my role in supporting a very bright, enthusiastic young class teacher.

In recent years, and boosted by the advent of schools purchasing extra SLT time via various state government funding initiatives, departmental SLPs are often found in the classroom working alongside the teacher, modelling and supporting many different whole-class language and literacy learning programs. Many of these excellent programs have been developed by DET SLPs across different regions, including Read It Again – FoundationQ! (DETE 2013) and Read It Again – KindergartenQ! (DET 2016), Structured Tier Two Instruction of Vocabulary Experiences (STRIVE) (DET 2010), Support A Talker (DETA 2006), PrepTalk (DETA 2007), and Programs for Oral Language and Literacy in the Early Years (POLLEY) (DETE 2013).

Along the way, DET SLPs have become curriculum-savvy! They are even more aware of the classroom and curriculum language demands on students and how to work within the class units to support students’ language learning needs. In my special school in particular, use of ACARA’s General Capabilities (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority 2014) has allowed me to talk the same talk as school staff and to become more educationally relevant with my support and programs.

At this point, I should mention DET’s recognition of the EAP category of SLI (DET 2015). The SLP’s role in the SLI verification process, while time-consuming, is critical, and underscores the vital contribution to DET that has been made by departmental SLT services. Prior to the ascertainment and verification processes coming online, SLPs still supported these students. The advantage now is that teachers and parents are more aware of students with these very specific language and speech disabilities, and the impact of these on their ability
to learn. Another advantage is that schools are very aware of the need for focused oral language programming for these students, and that this is a whole-school responsibility, not just that of the visiting SLP.

Service delivery

One of my ongoing dilemmas has been how to use my service delivery options creatively to meet all the communication needs of students at my allocated schools. On reflection, I’m not sure how we met these needs in the past, considering the time constraints and the models of service delivery that we used. The usual service delivery options were either individual or small group intervention, and some school- or home-based follow-up programs.

Over the years, however, there has been a movement from focused individual support in artificial, withdrawal contexts to naturalistic contexts, particularly targeting intervention to support students in the classroom to access the school curriculum. There has also been a transition in language intervention from purely syntax-based programs to programs which include semantic and pragmatic targets, and to more text-level language interventions, again relating our oral language interventions to the literacy focus of the classroom.

When I was first employed by the department, speech therapists provided services to students from non-state schools as well as state government schools. These students would attend individual therapy sessions with me at my base, usually during after-school hours. We also ran intensive language programs and fluency programs during the school holidays, where targeted students attended our program all day, every day for a week. This was in the days when speech therapists did not have access to conditions such as accumulated days off and only had four weeks annual recreation leave — hence we were working most holidays, and running these intensive programs was a great use of our time and very effective for these students. These aspects of past service delivery don’t exist anymore — and I’m not sure how we fitted it all in!

Resources

Over my time with the department I have also been very fortunate to work with many innovative and talented SLPs who were very passionate about their work and very talented in their use of time and creation of resources. Younger SLPs should take a look around their bases at some of these wonderful resources (at least wonderful in their time, most of them are out of print now), including the yellow, red, blue and green *Speech Therapy Resource Folders* (Department of Education 1987), the *Exchanges* (Department of Education 1990) video and print series for parents and teachers focusing on children’s communication development and disorders, and *Talk Tapes* — part of the Therapy Services Resource Kit (Department of Education 1991) — with video examples of students with a range of communication difficulties and disorders.

Many older SLPs may also remember the video link-ups which enabled live professional development videoconferences to occur with participants from across the state. We were ahead of our times for the 1980s! We had some amazing guest speakers, including clinical psychologist, Marion Blank, whose framework for analysing responses to questioning is still used today.
Another excellent and still very current resource has been Talkabout — a professional development journal produced twice a year by SLPs working in DET. Each issue focuses on a particular theme related to supporting school students with special needs in communication. Content is organised by SLP representatives from each region who canvass articles from numerous sources and then send these articles to the talented editor/SLP, Bryan Ward. Talkabout was originally produced in hard copy format, but is now produced digitally and available for download from DET’s the Learning Place onto iPads and other devices.

In summary, I have tried to outline some of the key changes that have impacted on my day-to-day life as an SLP working in DET. Needless to say, there have been too many changes to mention them all. You’ve seen a lot when you have worked through four (nearly five) versions of the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (Semel, Wig & Secord 2006). However, there are still a number of constants that I see every day. I see the passion, enthusiasm and dedication that DET SLPs employ to help students reach their full potential. I see a profession that moves and changes with the times, and the evidence. And I see extremely clever and creative people doing amazing jobs!

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The advent and expansion of statewide professional development and training: from interregional meetings to the Therapy, Nursing and Teaching Conference

Shannan Hammond  
Speech-language pathologist-in-charge  
North Coast Region

In order to provide quality SLT services for students with speech language communication needs, SLPs have always valued and sought out professional learning opportunities — be they on a small or large scale.

Looking back to 1966, the first two speech therapists were appointed in Brisbane to the Department of Education, after Elizabeth Usher (then head of the sub-department of Speech and Hearing at The University of Queensland) negotiated with the Department of Education to employ speech therapists. This reflected the fact that many people in the field of education thought that speech therapists had a role to play in the educational context (Department of Education 1991).

By 1971, this number had grown to 21 speech therapists, located in a number of geographic areas across the state. Records show that, during the school holidays, speech therapists started providing collegial support for each other through case studies and professional development (Department of Education 1991).

Further opportunities for growth of professional skills and knowledge came in 1975, when a seminar to coincide with the Annual National Conference of the AASH was organised in Brisbane, from 10–14 February. The seminar was held at the Speech and Hearing Department, The University of Queensland, with speech therapists from Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, the South Coast and Nambour attending.

Departmental speech therapists were given leave to attend the National AASH Conference on Severe Communication Impairment when Brisbane hosted it in 1981. During this year, the Brisbane West Education Region held its first one-day seminar for speech therapists.

In 1982, speech therapists attended workshops on stuttering held in conjunction with the AASH conference (Department of Education 1991). The need for professional development for therapists in isolated areas was also recognised, and senior therapists met to formulate proposals to ensure professional development could be provided for this unique group of employees.

Two speech therapists, Kathi Abbs and Elaine Zendler, ran workshops statewide in 1984 to introduce therapists to the basic principles of the ECO approach (Adult Child Partnerships for Communication Development) (Department of Education 1991).

Significant advancements in the ability to provide professional development to speech therapists across the state came in 1988, though the use of videoconferencing facilities. Topics included in the seven Linkup '88 videoconferences were: Assessing the Child with
Interregional meetings occurred during the 1980s and early 1990s to respond to the needs of staff and provide opportunities for collegial sharing and innovation. In January 1990, responsibility for occupational therapist and physiotherapists working in schools was transferred from the Department of Family Services and the Department of Health to the Department of Education.

With an ever-growing workforce, and in recognition of the benefits of cross-discipline opportunities for professional development, the beginning of the 1990s saw the introduction of the statewide Training and Development Seminar for therapists. TADS ran annually throughout that decade and the 2000s.

In 2009, teachers were invited to be part of the seminar, and while TADS was still a forum for quality, discipline-specific professional development, the seminar also presented opportunities to highlight and explore the collaboration and learning benefits that therapists and teachers could achieve when using shared evidence and innovative practices to support student learning.

For 2012, TADS was retitled as the Disability Services Support Unit Conference – Training and Development Seminar, in acknowledgement of the wider audiences that it had been attracting over the years, namely nursing staff employed by the department, and in reference to the variety of professional development that participants could now access. The conference had outgrown its early origins of discipline-only professional development, and was now firmly rooted in promoting and supporting therapists to engage in partnerships, curriculum practice and leadership, and this was reflected in the title of the 2012 conference.

Due to the regionalisation of DSSU services and staff at the end of 2012, the regional senior therapists and nurses across the state planned the conference in 2013. The conference was reframed as the Therapy, Nursing and Teaching Conference. The TNT conference was held in 2013, and again in 2014. At the completion of the 2014 conference, therapists and nurses voted to hold TNT biennially. The 2016 conference, with its focus on Collaboration, Change and Challenges, was a great success.

Continued access to worthwhile, educationally relevant professional development is a benefit for all SLPs working for DET. Moving staff along a learning pathway that ensures they can develop, consolidate or extend their skills and knowledge, ensures a workforce that is capable of providing quality SLT services.

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