

# SPEECH PATHOLOGY AND ITS PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION IN AUSTRALIA

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## THE DEVELOPMENT

Australia, with its land mass of 7,692,024 square kilometres and a range of climates from sub-alpine to tropical, offers its diverse population of just over 20 million, a wide possibility of living, working and recreational opportunities. A significant proportion of the population, as elsewhere in the world however, has some form of communication and or swallowing difficulty which impacts to varying degrees on how they can live their lives. Many will have some form of intervention provided by a Speech Pathologist, most of whom are members of their professional association, Speech Pathology Australia. In the 2002 Speech Pathology Australia Membership Survey, a significant majority of speech pathologists (85%) were found to 'practise in highly accessible areas which includes not only capital city locations throughout Australia but also outer metropolitan regions and regional centres', 12% were in accessible to moderately accessible locations, whilst 0.9% and 0.6% were considered to be remote and very remote respectively.<sup>1</sup>



From its small but determined beginnings in 1929, Speech Pathology in Australia has grown into a well recognised profession that constantly seeks ways in which to provide better services to its clients and members.

Ever since people could record events, there have been references to communication disorders. According to Margaret Eldridge, in her book *A History of the Treatment of Speech Disorders*, Egyptian hieroglyphics and Peruvian pottery described or illustrated stuttering, cleft palate and a range of other deformities associated with speech organs.<sup>2</sup> In the Bible, Moses proclaimed he was 'slow of speech and slow of tongue' (Exodus 4:10), whilst in early Greek and Roman times, people were named for the affliction they carried, with 'Balbus' referring to those with speech impediments.<sup>3</sup>

The tongue attracted a lot of attention and blame. Celsus, who lived in the first century, prescribed 'a gargle...a decoction of thyme, hyssop, pennyroyal; he should drink water, and the head and neck and mouth and the parts below the chin be well rubbed. The tongue should be rubbed with lazerwort, and he should chew pungent substances such as mustard, garlic, onions, and make every effort to articulate. He must exercise himself to retain his breath, wash his head with cold water and then vomit'.<sup>4</sup> Fortunately for clinician, client, family and friends alike, methods have moved on!

The Renaissance brought a renewed vigour to medical science and the management of speech deficits. Da Vinci and Vesalius' forays into the dissection of human bodies challenged long accepted thinking, whilst Paré, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Parisian Barber-Surgeon, used his experience with the many war wounded of the time, to create practical therapies, such as obturators to assist where the victim's palate had been shot away or corroded by disease. A manual on sign language appeared in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, surgical techniques improved, artificial larynxes were invented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, investigations into the structure and function of the brain grew and a gradual awareness of the interaction of psychological and physiological factors developed.<sup>5</sup>

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw oral communication thrown into sharper focus through advances in technology such as the telephone and the gramophone. Across Europe, there were moves to formalise the training in and provision of therapy for communication deficits. These moves were slowed by war, although the casualties of war led to progression in the management of acquired speech and language disorders. This time, however, a wider range of people were affected through the 'advances' in war technology, such as aeroplanes, gas and explosives.<sup>6</sup>

In 1924, in Vienna, the International Association of Logopaedics and Phoniatics held its first congress, in which eight countries were represented by some sixty to seventy delegates. This provided an ongoing forum for advances in the understanding and treatment of communication disorders, the value of which is still in evidence today. In the United States, too, there was new impetus, although much had already been achieved in the 1800s and early 1900s.<sup>7</sup> However it was to England that the woman who is considered the founder of speech therapy in Australia, went to gain her training.

Elinor Wray undertook speech therapy training at the Central School and at St Thomas's Hospital in London and returned to Sydney in 1929 intending to open a clinic, only to be told there was '...no opening for speech therapists'.<sup>8</sup> However, in a move that has been repeated by many medical and education colleagues, her potential was recognised and Sir Robert Wade, later President of the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children, Sydney, provided her with the opportunity to work with his cleft-palate patients. The resulting positive outcomes led to the creation of the first hospital speech therapy clinic in Australia at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in 1931, with Miss Wray being appointed therapist in charge.<sup>9</sup>



Elinor Wray with NSW Lost Chord Club members, 1958. Photo courtesy Speech Pathology Australia.

The value of the profession was also being recognised in Victoria with Mrs Olive Cherry, another London trained therapist, opening a clinic at the Legacy Club in Melbourne in 1933. As the need for services became more obvious, an Advisory Committee for the Training of Speech Therapists had its inaugural meeting in Sydney in December 1936. By 1939, the first two year diploma course (now the degree course at the University of Sydney) had been established with Elinor Wray as its Foundation Director. A clinic was also established in South Australia in 1939, founded by Miss Olive Abotomey (whose voice recordings are still in existence today), bringing the total of qualified speech therapists in the whole of Australia to the grand total of three. By 1942 a graduate of this first training school, Miss E McCallum (later Mrs E Carver), was able to establish a clinic at the Children's Hospital in Perth, Western Australia.<sup>10</sup>

It is worthy to note that this all happened in the context of the 1930s Depression, a lack of knowledge about the profession within Australia, the impending and ensuing war in Europe and in a time when communications within Australia, let alone the rest of the world, were very much more limited than they are today. Tenacity and determination must have been key attributes of these founders and their supporters.

Much has happened in the field of Speech Pathology and in its professional organisation since these times. Below is a snap shot of some of the milestones along the way.

- 1944 The Australian Association of Speech Therapists was founded in Sydney.
- 1945 Miss Margaret Badcock (later Eldridge) was appointed Director of Training in Victoria. (this course is now located at La Trobe University)
- 1946 The South Australian Council of Speech Science and Speech Therapy and the Provisional Council for Speech Therapy in Western Australia were established.
- 1947 Victorian Council of Speech Therapy replaced the Provisional Council.
- 1948 Clinics at the Royal Hobart Hospital in Tasmania and in the Psychiatric Department in Brisbane, Queensland, were established.
- 1949 The Australian College of Speech Therapists (ACST) established as an unincorporated body.
- 1951 The Australian Branch of the British Medical Association granted the ACST full professional recognition as the examining, qualifying and representative body for speech therapy within the commonwealth. The college awarded the first Licentiate of the ACST to graduates in Victoria and NSW.
- 1953 The ACST incorporated. The registered office of the college was situated in Canberra, but administration was conducted from Sydney until January 1963, when it was transferred to Melbourne.
- 1954 Miss Grace Ellis was elected as the first president of the college. The inaugural general meeting of the newly incorporated college was held on 27 March. This required the establishment of Memorandum and Articles of Association. A council of management with representation from each state was convened. NSW Hospitals Commission accepted the Memorandum and Articles and handed over the conduct of examinations and the awarding of diplomas to the college, as of 25 September 1954. The first members of council received one-third of the first class rail fare to attend council meetings.
- 1955 First Annual General Meeting (AGM) held 12 March 1955 at Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children, Camperdown, Sydney. First annual conference held.
- 1956 Branches of the college established in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland.
- 1958 The ACST was affiliated with the International Association of Logopaedics and Phoniatics (IALP).
- 1962 A Speech therapy diploma course was established within the Department of Child Health at University of Queensland. Elizabeth Usher was appointed as part-time lecturer. (The courses in NSW and Victoria were administered by the councils for Speech Therapy)
- 1963 The Victorian Council of Speech Therapy was successful in raising money, some of which was allocated to the Victorian branch of ACST, to be used in establishing a national office for the college and the Victorian branch.
- 1967 Minutes of a council meeting propose a change to the profession's name to 'Logopaedist' be brought to the members at the next AGM. First Speech Therapy degree course in Australia commenced at the University of Queensland. First Margaret Eldridge Memorial Lecture presented.



Graduates - the first degree speech therapy students from the University of Queensland in 1969. These were the first Bachelors of Speech Therapy from an Australian university. From left Lesley McNevin, Noelle Webster, Gail Plunket, Moira Drummond, Eve Muszynka, Jan Armstrong, Naomi Lewis. Sue Postle graduated a month later because her exams were deferred as she had just become Miss Queensland. Photo courtesy Lesley Henderson.

- 1976 The Private Speech Pathologist's Association (NSW) commenced.
- 1978 The first students graduated from Sturt College of Advanced Education (now at Flinders University, South Australia) and from the Western Australian Institute of Technology (now at Curtin University, Western Australia). Australia had five courses in speech pathology.
- 1979 After many years of lobbying, the Queensland state government introduced *The Speech Therapists' Act*, thereby creating a registration board (still the only state in Australia to have one).
- 1981 The Elinor Wray award instituted.
- 1984 Members offered optional professional indemnity insurance. The Association employed a full-time general secretary. The government released the National Language Policy. As a result of a direct submission from the Association, the Committee on Education recommended that all federal buildings be designed to incorporate communication access for the communicatively disabled.
- 1985 The Association moved towards computerisation of the membership register. The Bulletin had a change of face and format and became the *Australian Communication Quarterly* (ACQ).
- 1986 A new set of significantly updated and amended Articles of Association were adopted. The changes resulted in the council being seen as a board of directors, responsible for the overall management of the company. Council membership reduced to 11 members: three office-bearers and representation from each state or territory. Margaret Seedsman appointed as first full-time executive director.
- 1987 The Policy and Procedure Manual was created.
- 1988 The National Corporate Plan and individual branch corporate plans developed.
- 1991 The membership at the AGM gave the mandate for council to pursue the restructure of the Association into the portfolio format.
- 1992 Amended Articles of Association were adopted which included reducing membership of council to 8 members and a president. Elinor Wray died in December. Council approved new guidelines for eligibility for membership, spelling the end of the national exam.
- 1994 Competency Based Occupational Standards (CBOS) documents launched. The standards form the basis for entry to the profession and establish the standards and objectives for speech pathologists in a formal and accessible manner. Speech Pathology Program commences at the University of Newcastle.
- 1995 The Association undertook initiatives to ensure the growth of the profession Empowerment project commenced. Marketing consultant employed.
- 1996 The National Strategic Plan: Working Towards 2000 released to the membership in February. The inaugural Speech Pathology Week was held to raise awareness of the profession and Association. Members voted to change the name AASH to the Speech Pathology Association of Australia, to be known as Speech Pathology Australia. A new logo and byline - 'giving people a say in life' - also developed as part of the total marketing strategy. Association website launched. Telstra launched the TTY (Teletypewriter) program which subsidises the purchase of telephone typewriters for customers with significant hearing and communication impairments.
- 1997 National employment register commenced. Speech Pathology Australia purchased a property in Bank Place, Melbourne, which became its new national headquarters.

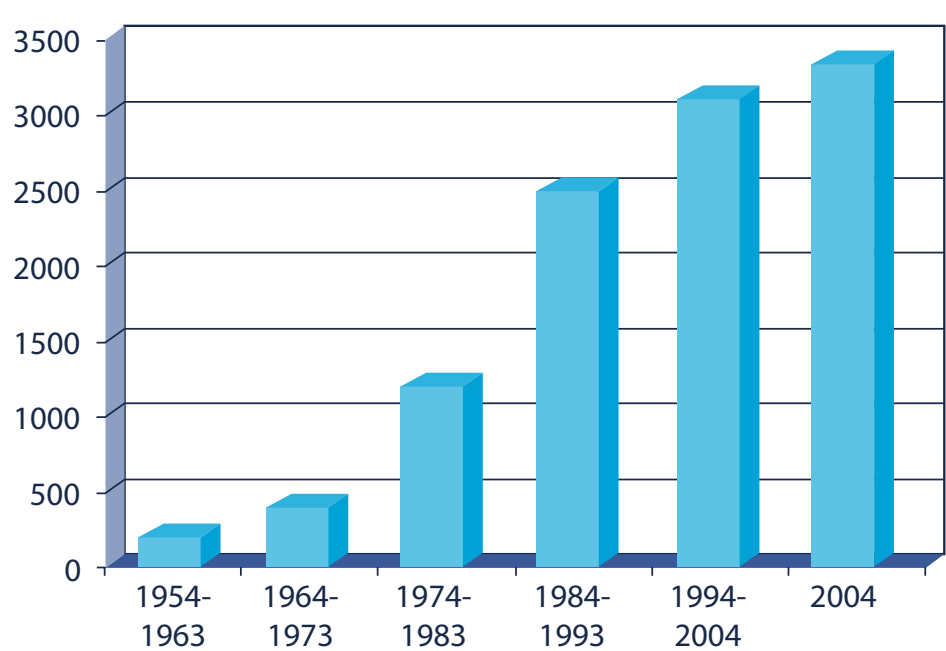


11-19 Bank Place, Melbourne. The Association has progressed significantly from the brown suitcase which held the old minutes and documents of historical significance to owning and being located in this impressive building in the heart of Melbourne's CBD. Photo courtesy Alison Russell.

- 1968 A group of Ear Nose and Throat surgeons proposed setting up a new association - Australian Hearing and Speech Association - in opposition to the college. The college already covered the aims and details and fulfilled for its members the function of the organisation proposed.
- 1970 Council recognised the American Masters degree and Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) to be equivalent to the Australian Bachelor degree for eligibility for membership.
- 1971 Council discussed creating an affiliate membership for New Zealand speech therapists.
- 1973 The college's role in training was phased out.
- 1974 Australian Journal of Human Communication Disorders began publication. Master of Speech Pathology by Research introduced at University of Queensland.
- 1974-75 The title used for members of the profession changed from Speech Therapist to Speech Pathologist. The Association no longer conducted examinations nor granted licentiates to graduates. This responsibility was undertaken by the appropriate tertiary institutions, with the Association developing recommended minimum academic requirements for membership
- 1975 Association name changed from ACST to the Australian Association of Speech and Hearing (AASH). The national office was established



- 1998 Speech Pathology program commenced at Charles Sturt University in Albury, New South Wales.
- 1999 Dr Linda Worrall presented the inaugural Elizabeth Usher Memorial Lecture at the Sydney conference. The new Association journal, 'Advances in Speech Language Pathology', was launched. Speech Pathology Australia celebrated its 50th anniversary.
- 2000 The Professional Self Regulation program introduced with over 1500 members accepting the invitation to join the voluntary scheme. The 'Future Directions Plan' reorganised the portfolios with greater emphasis on research, member networks and communication. 'Member Meetings' and 'Branch Forums' across Australia introduced.
- 2001 The Principles of Practice completed. Master of Speech Language Pathology commenced at Macquarie University.
- 2002 The Scope of Practice of Speech Pathology in Australia developed. The Education Package associated with the Code of Ethics completed. Research grants provided to clinicians and students throughout Australia.
- 2003 Report on Evidence Based Practice completed. Research Support Program established amongst the Membership. The Private Practice Reference Group and Private Practitioners assist in the 'Guide to Establishing a Private Practice'. Professional Self Regulation the focus of a promotional campaign which emphasised the Certified Practising Speech Pathologist concept. The inaugural Book of the Year awarded, with two categories - Best Speech/Sound Development and Best Language Development.
- 2004 The new Speech Pathology Australia website developed by Fusion launched. The Student Member Network developed. The Mutual Recognition of International Reciprocity signed. Speech Pathology Australia supports the International Association of Logopaedics and Phoniatics World Congress in Brisbane.



Membership growth 1954 - 2004.