

Pair's silent struggle for a new start

By Sue Mikkelsen

AFTER almost 50 years of marriage, Noosaville's Stan and Corrie Hendriksen can almost read each other's thoughts.

But after the debilitating effects on Mrs Hendriksen of Alzheimer's Disease and a stroke, they are now looking to speech therapy to help bring back their ability to communicate with each other.

Mrs Hendriksen is one of the first patients for the new speech pathologist at the Eden Rehabilitation Centre at Cooroy, Sarah Lock, who is working with the couple to bring back some of Mrs Hendriksen's speech and language.

Alzheimer's Disease had already started affecting Mrs Hendriksen's ability to remember words when she had a stroke following an operation on her shoulder, after she fell.

"She was a very fit and active lady and she's now very changed," Mr Hendriksen said. "I just hope she will be able to speak normally again.



"We are limited to very simple conversation, using gestures."

Mr Hendriksen said that after only a couple of weeks of therapy, they had "high hopes" she would become more fluent in her speech.

"She's starting to express herself," he said. "I can virtually read her thoughts but I would like her to be able to communicate with us again."

He said she had made a lot of effort to overcome the memory loss from Alzheimer's Disease before the stroke and now hoped the speech therapy would help further.

"We've got notebooks everywhere - we're quite prepared to fight back," he said.



LOST FOR WORDS: Corrie Hendriksen with husband Stan and speech pathologist Sarah Lock

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"We all take for granted that we can communicate, but when we are confronted by it, it's quite something."

Ms Lock said speech therapy could help people who had lost part or all of their language or speech following a stroke, brain damage as the result of an accident, or conditions such as Alzheimer's Disease or Motor Neurone Disease.

She said words became jumbled or forgotten.

"A word might be on the tip of

the tongue - they know what they want to say but can't say it," she said.

"We find out what's happened and target the bits that are damaged and help them regain their skills or find ways to get around it."

She said speech pathologists could devise therapies and activities for word finding to suit each patient, such as picture boards, gestures, and computer programs.

She said stroke sufferers gained

most speech recovery in the first few months after the event, although gains could be made for months or years after.

"We rely on our language so much but don't ever have to think about it," Ms Lock said. "So when it doesn't come naturally or something goes wrong, we don't know what to do."

Stroke Week is this week, and Eden Rehabilitation Centre recently marked Speech Pathology Week.

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