

## Stuttering Therapy and Preschool Aged Children



### What is the Lidcombe Program?

The Lidcombe Program is a behavioural treatment for preschool aged children who stutter. This means children don't receive direct instruction to change their speech pattern. Instead, the program is centred on parents receiving training under the guidance of a speech pathologist. This occurs during weekly clinic visits where the speech pathologist trains the parent to conduct therapy and also how to measure or 'rate' their child's stuttering severity on a 10 point rating scale.

The Lidcombe Program is conducted in **two stages**:

- ❖ **Stage 1** involves weekly clinic visits and daily treatment sessions conducted by parents in the child's everyday environment
- ❖ **Stage 2** begins once the child's stuttering has reached a low level. Daily treatment and clinic visits occur less frequently over a period of weeks and months, provided a low level of stuttering is maintained



**The aim of the Lidcombe Program is to completely (or almost) get rid of your child's stutter, not just within the clinic but in everyday situations and environments such as home and preschool.**

## How does the Lidcombe Program Work?

Put simply, we can help reduce the amount a child stutters by praising them and providing positive feedback for 'smooth', non-stuttered speech, and, less often, asking them to try again when they have clearly stuttered or have had a 'bumpy' moment.



## What is my role as a parent during the Lidcombe Program?

The Lidcombe Program requires a high level of motivation and commitment from both you as a parent and your child. Throughout the program your roles include:

- ❖ Working closely with your speech pathologist to tailor the program to your and your child's needs
- ❖ Attending weekly clinic visits with your child
- ❖ Taking severity ratings of your child's stutter throughout the week and reporting these to your clinician – these help us track your child's progress
- ❖ Conducting daily therapy at home for at least 10-15 minutes as well as alongside your speech pathologist within your weekly clinic visits
- ❖ Joint problem solving with your clinician if difficulties or concerns arise about your child's progress or conducting therapy at home

## What are my speech pathologist's roles during the Lidcombe Program?

Your speech pathologist will provide you with the tools, tricks and knowledge to conduct therapy at home with your child. Specifically your speech pathologist will:

- ❖ Help monitor your child's progress by measuring their stuttering severity at the start of each clinic visit
- ❖ Discuss your weekly severity ratings and how therapy is progressing at home
- ❖ Introduce and demonstrate therapy techniques and also perform these alongside you during weekly clinic visits.
- ❖ Provide feedback on how you are delivering therapy techniques to ensure therapy is a positive experience for both you and your child
- ❖ Provide activities or examples of activities you can use when conducting therapy at home with your child
- ❖ Assist in problem solving if difficulties or concerns arise about your child's progress or conducting therapy at home



## Some Common Questions



### **How long will the Lidcombe Program take?**

Recent research evidence indicates it may take up to 15 sessions for a child to reach Stage 2 of the Lidcombe Program. However, it is important to remember this is not set in stone but rather a guideline. Each child, parent and family is individual. We all learn and make progress at different rates. Therefore, some children may require additional time to reach Stage 2. Your speech pathologist will work with you to tailor the program to best suit your and your child's needs and in turn, facilitate progress.

**"I sometimes have difficulty finding time to conduct therapy at home every day, can another family member or my child's preschool teacher also do therapy?"**

We acknowledge it takes a high level of commitment and motivation to complete the Lidcombe Program. However, it is important therapy is only conducted by the parent or individual who has been trained to do so during weekly clinic visits. Therefore family members or preschool teachers who have not been trained cannot conduct therapy. This ensures therapy is conducted appropriately and that it



**"My child has speech sound errors as well as a stutter. Where do we start?"**

Depending on the age of the child and concerns of the family, we often recommend to address a child's stutter prior to working on improving speech sounds (although the research in this area is quite scarce!). As discussed above the Lidcombe Program works by praising a child for 'smooth', non-stuttered speech. Therapy for speech sounds on the other hand, encourage a child to repeatedly practise a sound in isolation or within words and sentences. As a result, the child is rewarded for producing sounds over a number of attempts consistently and correctly. If both types of therapy were to be conducted at the same time, a child may become confused with the conflicting types of feedback:

*"Make up your mind mum! This morning you told me my speech was nice and smooth with no bumps but now you're asking me to repeat myself and practise again and again?"*