

What is PLD?

Primary Language Disorder (PLD) refers to an all-encompassing developmental disorder that affects how children think about, understand and use language. It is the primary impairment that contributes to restrictions in an individual's participation and wellbeing in everyday activities. For a child with PLD, it is the language difficulties that impact most upon the child's development and his/her access to the educational curriculum. PLD includes, but is not limited to children with Speech Language Impairment (SLI).

What is SLI?

SLI is a disability funding category for students defined by the Department of Education and Training (DET) as those 'requiring significant education adjustments as a result of having a severe ongoing primary spoken communication disorder'. The impairment relates to a student's capacity in speech/language comprehension and / or production that significantly impacts on their educational progress compared with their age group. Specific criteria determined by DET need to be met for the school of a child to be eligible to apply for additional financial support. DET stipulates that a child meeting the criteria for SLI cannot also be recognised under the disability categories of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Intellectual Impairment (II).

How do PLD & SLI differ?

In contrast, the term 'PLD' refers to *all* children with SLI, as well as *some (not all)* children with II or ASD, as long as it is shown that language/communication is the primary contributing factor to the child's difficulties in accessing learning. It can include a wide range of difficulties that may not be identified within any one individual category listed. These may include:

- Expressive language: using language to express and communicate with others
- Receptive language: understanding the language used by others
- Behaviour: difficulties with attention and listening, and unacceptable behaviours
- Social use of language: difficulty relating to others and participating appropriately in social situations
- Senses: difficulty with visual and auditory skills, touch, taste, smell, balance & body awareness.
- Difficulty with gross and fine motor skills.

Who uses the term PLD?

PLD is the term used by the LET'S TALK Outreach Program and The Glenleighden School to define the group of children eligible to receive our services.



let's talk
Developmental Hub
www.letstalk.org.au

Helping children to speak
... and find their voice



THE GLENLEIGHDEN
SCHOOL

www.glenleighden.org.au

Primary Language Disorder – the hidden disability

There is an unfortunate, but nevertheless very real, chance that someone you know, or someone you will meet, will have an insidious disability. The person may not show any outward signs of disability, no intellectual impairment, no obvious physical indications of a problem – seemingly able to see and hear and walk as well as anyone else – but it may be there, hidden as it were.

It is likely this problem will have, or already has had, a serious impact on the life of the person affected – on his or her ability to learn, to earn, to communicate with and to interact with others, and even to understand and appreciate the world in general.

This disability will probably mean those affected could experience some or all of the following: significant learning difficulty; social isolation; poor communication skills; behaviour problems; lowered employment prospects; limited literacy skills; poor problem-solving capacity; difficulty with daily life skills and independence; and more.

The statistics tell the story. As many as one in eight school-age children in Australia could be affected by this disorder. In the United Kingdom, the figure is put at one in 14 of the whole population.

This insidious disability is known as **Primary Language Disorder**.

PLD manifests itself in a variety of ways, including delayed and/or limited ability to talk, read, spell and use grammar appropriately, failure to sufficiently comprehend what others say or what is read, reduced level of literacy achievement, a limited capacity to appreciate concepts and abstracts, and difficulty concentrating and remaining on-task.

Because of these “hidden” impairments, those affected will face great difficulty simply communicating with others – even their parents and brothers and sisters and other children and young people, for example. They may also face a host of other problems – perhaps difficulty reading a map, or following a recipe, planning a trip, handling money, understanding the processes of banking, or what the square root of a number means. The list just goes on and on and on.

Of course, in the case of some of those affected, there can be other issues that may not be “hidden” at all. These may involve problems with balance, or a tendency to tire quickly, or the opposite, such as sudden bursts of energy or unexpected bouts of activity.

Regardless, dealing with the downsides of **Primary Language Disorder** can be a challenge. The first step is to have it correctly diagnosed. The next step is addressing the problems that arise. This may involve the expertise of speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and psychologists.

In Queensland, such specialists are available to provide assessment and therapy through the **LET'S TALK** professional centre and **The Glenleighden School** in Brisbane. **LET'S TALK** offers a range of services for the identification and remediation of language difficulties, other developmental difficulties and language related learning difficulties.

If you would like to know more, the staff at **LET'S TALK** will be happy to help.

Fact Sheet 1