

## Thesis abstract

# Toddlers with cleft palate: enhancing communication through holistic child- and family-centred practice

Anna Cronin

Abstract of a thesis for a Doctorate of Philosophy submitted to Charles Sturt University, Australia

Cleft palate with or without cleft lip (CP±L) is one of the most common congenital conditions and impacts speech, language, feeding, middle ear function, appearance, and daily life. This thesis consists of two parts.

Part 1 includes analysis of interview data from the author's Churchill Fellowship visits with six international specialist speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in four countries. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO, 2007) had utility in describing these specialist SLPs' practice.

Part 2 involves observation, interviews, and collection of artefacts from seven Australian toddlers with CP±L, 13 parents, and 12 significant others (e.g., educators, grandparents). Children's speech and language is analysed, and interviews reveal the impact of CP±L on the whole child, family strength and support, and family isolation and trauma.

The thesis is innovative, theoretically driven, and sequential in its approach to recommending a shift in the way SLPs approach practice. There are three main findings: (1) having CP±L affects many aspects of toddlers' lives, (2) children and families' voices should be privileged in co-creating the intervention journey in collaboration with professionals, and (3) non-specialist professionals need to understand the impact of CP±L and know how to support toddlers and families holistically.

Dr Anna Cronin  
School of Teacher Education  
Charles Sturt University  
Bathurst NSW 2795  
AUSTRALIA

E-mail: [acronin@csu.edu.au](mailto:acronin@csu.edu.au)

URL: <https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/en/publications/toddlers-with-cleft-palate-enhancing-communication-through-holist>