

Visual vs Auditory Learning – Are we recognising the need for both?



By Brenda Baird

What do Jamie Oliver, Keira Knightley, Richard Branson, Ted Turner, Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein have in common? They are all internationally recognised in their chosen fields and they are dyslexic. The only famous dyslexic Australian that comes to mind is Kerry Packer and it's only common knowledge because he spoke openly about it.

The fact that we only know about Kerry Packer's dyslexia is not that he is a unique Australian in this sense, it is because dyslexia is not recognised in Australia and most suffer because they remain undiagnosed.

Why is dyslexia not recognised in Australia?

Depending what research you reference, it is estimated that 15-30% the population is affected to some extent by a "learning difficulty". A large number of these learning difficulties stem from the condition we know as dyslexia. Many countries worldwide acknowledge this fact and provide suitable assessment criteria and appropriate funding towards education and training.

Why is Australia an exception to the rule? More importantly, why is Queensland an exception to the rule? Is it because we are considered to be the "Smart State"?

Despite technological advances, dyslexics are still curriculum challenged. Literacy remains crucial to living a life of quality, yet too many dyslexics in Queensland and Australia continue to suffer silently.

Dyslexia is more than a reading problem. Unrecognised or untreated dyslexia, which includes reading, writing, mathematics, motor co-ordination and attention disorders, prevents a child or adult from reaching his or her true potential."

Ms. Baird adds, "There are two ways of understanding things – visually or verbally. Dyslexics have visual, multi-dimensional minds, which are less predisposed to word-based thinking.

Because dyslexics are taught predominantly in an auditory world (phonics) they are often considered to be lazy, unmotivated or slow learners. Unfortunately, this leads to rejection, isolation and low self-esteem.

While a visual learner may appear to struggle academically they are usually bright, intelligent and creative – Albert Einstein, Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison are examples of some of the most creative dyslexics in history. Next time you turn on a light, a computer or make a telephone call remember it was created because the person was dyslexic not in spite of it.

Are we ignoring the next generation of great contributors to our society by not acknowledging learning differences of dyslexia?

Dyslexia Australia is a privately owned company providing advocacy, tuition, and support to Dyslexics and their families.