

SPEECH PATHOLOGISTS

2026 Satisfaction Survey Report

e4 PEOPLE



We reached out to 692 Speech Pathologists working across **aged care, disability, community health, and allied health services** to understand satisfaction levels, workplace challenges, and what factors influence **long-term retention** in 2026.

This report combines **quantitative survey results with direct practitioner feedback**, capturing the realities of working as a Speech Pathologist in an environment shaped by workforce shortages, funding changes, and increased demand for services.

While the profession continues to attract clinicians passionate about quality outcomes, the findings highlight **structural and organisational risks** that threaten sustainability and retention.

1. Job Satisfaction with Current Role

Overall job satisfaction among Speech Pathologists surveyed was low to moderate, with no respondents rating themselves as highly satisfied.

National satisfaction ratings

- Very Dissatisfied: 33.3%
- Dissatisfied: 33.3%
- Neutral: 33.3%
- Satisfied: 0%

Despite positive elements such as supportive teams and flexible work arrangements, dissatisfaction was driven by workplace culture issues, workload imbalance, and limited career progression.

Key contributors to satisfaction

- Supportive team and workplace culture
- Work-life balance and flexible arrangements
- Access to resources for quality service delivery
- Job stability

▶ *“Supportive team and flexibility are the only reasons I’ve stayed.”*

WHAT THIS MEANS

Speech Pathologists value flexibility and culture, but these factors alone are no longer sufficient to sustain long-term satisfaction without career growth and psychological safety.



2. Key challenges facing Speech Pathologists

Respondents consistently identified organisational and systemic challenges as the main drivers of dissatisfaction.

Most commonly reported challenges

- Unreasonable workloads
- Limited opportunities for career progression
- Industry instability linked to funding and NDIS changes
- Underemployment and inconsistent caseloads

▶ *"There is no opportunity to grow."*

▶ *"Industry instability makes long-term planning impossible."*



WHAT THIS MEANS

Burnout and disengagement are being driven less by clinical work and more by workplace dynamics, instability, and unclear career pathways.

3. What would keep Speech Pathologists long-term

Respondents were clear about the conditions required for long-term commitment.

Key retention factors

- Improved work-life balance and flexible policies
- Strong, supportive leadership
- Clear pathways for career progression
- Manageable and predictable workloads
- Fair and transparent salary structures

▶ *"Better leadership support would make a difference."*

WHAT THIS MEANS

Retention depends on whether organisations treat Speech Pathologists as long-term professionals, not short-term service providers.



4. Salary & benefits

Salary levels varied significantly, reflecting differences in seniority, setting, and location.

Most commonly reported salaries:

- \$77K - \$95K (Grad - 2 years experience)
- \$95K - \$110K (2 - 5 years experience)
- \$110K - \$120K+ (5+ years experience & leadership)

Benefits were inconsistent and often minimal:

- Some access to novated leases
- Limited additional perks reported
- Several respondents reported no benefits at all

▶ *"The pay does not reflect the complexity of the role."*



WHAT THIS MEANS

Compensation inconsistency contributes to dissatisfaction, particularly when senior clinicians see limited differentiation between responsibility and reward.

State Breakdown

Consistent themes emerged across states.

- **NSW:** Higher dissatisfaction linked to workplace culture issues, lack of progression, and organisational instability.
- **VIC:** Mixed experiences, with reports of underemployment and low utilisation alongside flexibility.
- **QLD:** The market remains passive, with most clinicians content in their roles and those open to moving seeking greater variety, specialisation, or broader service exposure.
- **Nationality:** Concerns around bullying, workload management, and sector instability were shared regardless of location.

WHAT THIS MEANS

Challenges facing Speech Pathologists are systemic rather than location-specific, reinforcing the need for national workforce improvements.

Areas needing immediate attention

Speech Pathologists identified the following priorities for improvement:

- Safer workplace cultures free from bullying
- Clear, structured career progression
- Workload alignment with role expectations
- Leadership capability and accountability
- Greater stability across funding and service models

▶ *"Stability and leadership are the biggest gaps."*

WHAT THIS MEANS

Without cultural and leadership improvements, even well-resourced roles risk poor retention.

SUMMARY

This survey highlights a profession that continues to deliver essential services while operating under significant organisational strain.

Despite enjoying clinical work and flexible arrangements, many Speech Pathologists feel:

- Undervalued
- Stagnant in career progression
- Exposed to workplace risk and instability

If these issues are not addressed, the sector risks losing skilled clinicians to alternative roles, industries, or self-employment models.

Supporting Speech Pathologists through better leadership, career pathways, and workplace safety will be essential to sustaining the workforce into the future.

This survey will be expanded in future releases to increase response volumes, track satisfaction trends over time and strengthen national workforce insights. The aim is to support evidence-based workforce planning and retention strategies across allied health services in Australia.

