

FOREST HILL

## Elissa, 7, has power of speech

PUBLIC speaking can be a daunting experience, let alone when the audience includes the Prime Minister and the Governor-General.

But Elissa, 7, overcame her nerves to deliver a speech to more than 150 of Australia's most powerful people at the Australian Power of Speech event at Parliament House in Canberra last month.

Elissa, who was born with profound hearing loss and received two cochlear implants when she was 11 months old, talked about her progression through Taralye's Early Intervention Program, to her life today as a Grade 1 student.

"I talked about myself and my story," the Forest Hill girl said.

She also thanked Professor Graeme Clark, who invented the cochlear implant.

Elissa's mother, Ange Rizzuto, said Taralye had made a huge difference in her daughter's life.

"She learnt to speak at Taralye, and Taralye taught me how to teach her when we were at home," Ms Rizzuto said.

Taralye chief executive Therese Kelly said Elissa was proof of the bright future possible for children with hearing loss.



**Elissa, 7, was one of 12 children who spoke at the Power of Speech event at Parliament House.** Picture: RICHARD SERONG