

Finally, he's off the treadmill

JOHNSON IS ONE of the lucky ones. He had always had trouble in school with his reading and spelling, but somehow he kept pace with other students.

An outstanding math student, he caught up on reading and writing assignments during math periods, and by the end of elementary school he had coped with his learning disabilities without missing a grade.

But by high school things were catching up with him.

It wasn't just essay assignments that baffled him. He needed time for lab reports, for science, and for other subjects where his ability to write was taken for granted.

Then a teacher spotted his problem and referred him to Victoria READ Society for evaluation.

"I was a slow reader, and I couldn't spell," said John in an interview.

"I still don't really enjoy reading — I wouldn't

pick up a book for pleasure. But now I can read a book for the information in it, and that is something I couldn't do before I went to READ."

After his initial evaluation he started work on his individual program, working on a one-to-one basis with a teacher.

The result has been more time for the math.

"I used to have to use math time to finish my other work. The fact that I was good at math was the only thing that allowed me to keep up, but I didn't have a chance to do as much math as I wanted.

"Now I can get my school work done, and I have time for math, and time for things out of school — I always used to have so much homework to try to keep up with everyone else I couldn't go in for sports or anything else after school."

"I had a hard time getting information out of books doing homework, where there was no one to give me information verbally. It took more time than it should have."

John plans a career in engineering, and confidently expects to be able to write for scholarships to further his plans.

He doesn't expect to become adept at spelling, or to read books for enjoyment, but expects to get by competently in the computer age.

Engineers have reports to write, but John says "that's what they have computers for."

He already uses a word processor to write some essays and reports and expects to keep that up in university.

"You can set up a computer program that automatically corrects spelling and helps you get things right," says John. "I just have to know what I'm talking about and the computer will see to the extra bits."

But, he says, computers aren't always available and he has READ to thank for the fact that he can read and write competently.