

Opinion & Letters

Don't cut off deaf people's vital signs

I read with concern the inflated claims made by Tony Abrahams for the captioning device he is promoting to schools ("Computer system gives ears to those who cannot hear", July 19).

Technology is a great tool but, like any tool, it has limitations. It will be useful only if children are already literate and will do little for their cultural identity as deaf people or their confidence in face-to-face interaction.

Auslan (Australian Sign Language) is the equal of spoken English for complexity and speed. It is a language students can use when they are no longer connected to a laptop but want to socialise and build relationships. Written English is not.

If readers get the impression this invention will make every deaf student well-adjusted, confident and fluent in face-to-face communication, a reality check is needed. Staring at a computer screen all day will not build a life of fulfilling relationships. The invention of itself will not give deaf students the kind of future I would want. Only Auslan can give me that.

Kate Matairavula

Board member of Deaf Australia (NSW), Burwood