

Regional school establishes inclusive learning environment, supporting Deaf student to achieve academic excellence

For a moment, imagine going through your entire school life without being able to hear any of your teachers or speak directly to any of your classmates. This was exactly the experience of Deaf student Caroline Firus. However, the clever and determined Caroline did not let that stop her. In 2020, not only did she complete her VCE studies at Swifts Creek P-12 School, she was awarded DUX of the school, achieving academic excellence with an ATAR of 84.90 an outstanding achievement.

AT THE FOREFRONT OF CREATING INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Swifts Creek P-12 School could see Caroline's potential and took the progressive step to support her by creating a more accessible classroom. The school was offered a license to CaptionConnect by the Department of Education in partnership with Oncall Language Services.

CaptionConnect is a powerful, easy to use, cloud-based software solution that quickly and easily converts speech to text in real time and that can be used on a variety of devices. This allowed Caroline to follow along with the lessons by reading the near real-time, automated transcript.

Before the introduction of *CaptionConnect* Caroline received all of her instructions via an Auslan interpreter. Caroline's mother Halina had been employed by the school as an interpreter to support Caroline's learning. Halina has been instrumental in Caroline's education, playing a major role in supporting, advocating and interpreting for her daughter. The introduction of *CaptionConnect* alleviated some of the pressure on Halina to keep up with all of the teachers and the content. "The software was not without some teething problems as we initially got all the teachers on board using it but it was a saving grace for Caroline. Having the software which created a written transcript of each lesson helped us a lot." Explains Halina.

"I enjoyed using CaptionConnect, it followed the teachers words as they spoke, this improved my learning and knowledge. It is easy to use it and helped me to participate in the lessons."

- Caroline 2020 VCE Student

REAL TIME SPEECH-TO-TEXT, ENABLING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

CaptionConnect transcribes a presenter's speech and simultaneously displays the speech in text onto both the teacher's and all the students' screens in a live presentation. Students who are subscribers to the software can view the presentation in the same class or lecture room, remotely from their home, or even from a different country if required.

Caroline is now studying at a top University in Melbourne. She is studying teaching and hopes that her teaching qualifications will enable her to assist children with similar needs to her own to have an engaged and positive school experience, as well as achieve their academic potential.

