

Indigenous company Gulanga gifts Queanbeyan West sound technology



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24 Oct 2017, 6:13 p.m.



Gulanga director Craig Dukes joins in with a Year 2 class using the Soundfield technology at Queanbeyan West. Photo: Elliot Williams

Queanbeyan West Public School received a donation of specialist hearing equipment on Tuesday which will help students in the classroom.

Canberra information technology company Gulanga donated eight Soundfield sound amplification systems valued at nearly \$24,000 to the school.

The technology will be installed in eight infants classrooms which are assessed as having the greatest need.

Assistant principal of hearing in the Monaro region Felicity Ainsworth said roughly 20 percent of kids have some sort of hearing loss which often goes undiagnosed. She added children often experience intermittent hearing loss.



The Soundfield system projects sound throughout the classroom so all children hear equally well. Photo: Elliot Williams

While children need to have permanent hearing loss to receive extra, one-on-one help, Ms Ainsworth said the Soundfield system would help all children equally.

“Sometimes kids with a disability or a problem see themselves as being targeted and they don’t like to get extra help,” Ms Ainsworth said. “But if you have this, it’s non-negotiable, it’s in the classroom, they don’t even realise they’re being helped.”

The system projects sound that is input by a wearable microphone and delivers it around the classroom. It allows children even with no hearing loss to hear the teacher clearly no matter where they sit. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experience a higher incidence of hearing loss and this was a key incentive for Gulanga to get involved.

Gulanga director Craig Dukes explained the name of the company means ‘partnership’ in the Ngunnawal language and this was something the company held as a core belief. “Even though we’re a for-profit company we like to provide something back to the community as a social value,” Mr Dukes said.

He added the company would look at supporting preserving indigenous languages and increasing indigenous participation in information technology in future. Gulanga’s donation will create a tangible difference and will hopefully lead to a broader use of the technology Ms Ainsworth said.

“My ideal is for every classroom in the school to have a soundfield,” she said.

“Young kids need good language models.” “You learn by observing and if you can’t hear it [language] properly then you can’t use it properly.

This article was originally published in The Queanbeyan Age in Canberra on Tuesday October 24th 2017.