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SUMMER 23/24



AURACAST

John Ross

LINDSAY CREIGHTON

Muso Member shares his story

EMERGENCY PLANNING

Are your communication needs covered this storm season?

THE COST OF CONCEALING

Dr Katie Ekberg



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 **AURACAST**
A BLUETOOTH® TECHNOLOGY

Bluetooth 5.2+

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Presidents letter? Yeah no, maybe more like recent experiences or insights.

Recently, I was able to experience and use Auracast first hand and WOW, it's brilliant! For us with assistive technology it is a game changer.

One major factor is that this technology will be shared across all devices and users. This means that everyone will be using it, and for us that means if it is not working everyone will know about it.

When it comes to streaming audio to our devices no longer will we need special and expensive dedicated attachments. Instead, we will be using the same stream (broadcast) as everyone else.

The good news is assistive technology will be in the front line of its release.

Like any new Technology it takes time to roll out, and yes, initially it costs more waiting for competition to enter the room and prices to come down.

However, Auracast is a technology that is worth investing in. With its ability to provide a seamless and high-quality audio experience, it is sure to change the way we consume audio content. It will not only benefit individuals who enjoy listening to music or podcasts but also establishments that rely on audio content for their operations, but sometimes struggle in delivering it to those of us with a hearing loss, such as Airports, Train Stations, Cinemas, Houses of Worship, the list is endless.

AURACAST IS COMING

Moreover, Auracast is designed to be user-friendly. With its easy-to-use interface, users can easily navigate through the platform to access audio content. This means that even individuals who are not tech-savvy can benefit from this technology.

You will be able to walk freely around an airport with all the announcements streaming into your cochlear implant or hearing aid (CI/HA), no longer restricted to hearing loop zones.

Televisions and computers (new models supporting Bluetooth LE) will simply broadcast wirelessly direct to your CI/HA no longer will you need another TV Link, or Interface.

Overall, the introduction of Auracast is an exciting development, and I can't wait to see how it will revolutionize the assistive listening technology world. With its promise of accessibility, quality, and user-friendliness, it is definitely a game-changer.

WHAT ABOUT LOOPS?

The introduction of Auracast does not mean that hearing loops will become obsolete immediately. There are still many public spaces that have hearing loops installed, and many of us with existing CI's or HA's who rely on them. Additionally, not everyone may be able to afford the initial upgrade to a CI or HA with the wireless Auracast technology. Therefore, hearing loops will still be needed for a little while longer. But with the increasing accessibility and affordability of Auracast technology, we are moving towards a more inclusive and connected world for individuals with hearing loss.

As I said earlier, Auracast is for everybody so this fact alone means it's a significant step towards more accessible audio streams. With this technology, individuals with hearing loss can enjoy their favourite audio content, easier access to rehabilitation material with much less fuss and less pairing issues, and a much easier user interface.

It also means that we can move around freely in public spaces and still have access to audio broadcasts without the need for specific hearing loop zones. The introduction of Auracast is truly a game-changer in the assistive listening technology world, and I can't wait to see how it will continue to improve the lives of individuals with hearing loss.

COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

The Cochlear N8 is Auracast ready, with both Advanced Bionics and MedEL acknowledging they will be supporting Auracast with future product releases.

HEARING AIDS

Any Hearing Aid brand supporting Bluetooth will also eventually release new products with Auracast

HEADPHONES

Everyone, Including Apple Earpods, Sony, Sennheiser, BOSE and AUDEARA will be Auracast. Your children and grandchildren will be listening along to the exact same audio streams you do in the future.

John

Click here to Watch My YouTube VLOG:
My Cochlear Journey
If you would like to learn more.



The Cost of Concealing

Dr Katie Ekberg

Centre for Hearing Research
(CHEAR)
School of Health and Rehabilitation
Sciences
The University of Queensland

New learnings about stigma experiences of adults with hearing loss and their families



Stigma has long been viewed as a reason why people with hearing loss typically take 7-10 years to seek help for their hearing and why some people choose not to obtain or wear hearing devices. People with hearing difficulties regularly contend with the issue of telling or not telling others that they have a hearing problem, uncertain about how others might react. Wearing a cochlear implant or hearing aids often means that the disclosure is outside their control as others readily see the visible sign of the hearing problem. These feelings of stigma occur because the person feels that their hearing loss threatens their identity.

In a recent study at The University of Queensland, we explored: (1) how stigma is experienced by adults with hearing loss and their families, (2) how they manage stigma in everyday life, and (3) how these experiences relate to the decision to go ahead with hearing devices and to wear them in the long-term.

How stigma is experienced by adults with hearing loss and their families:

The study found that people with hearing loss had a range of stigma experiences. Family members, however, did not experience affiliate stigma (feeling stigmatized by being associated with the person with hearing loss) to a great extent. Most people in the study perceived hearing loss and/or hearing devices to be associated with the stereotype of ageing. Other stereotypes people perceived included disability, having a problem or weakness, and reduced intelligence. As one family member described:

“I think I’ve seen examples of where people take a position that assumes that the person with the hearing disability is less intelligent than everyone else” [FM17]

Adults with hearing loss and hearing care professionals had contrasting views on stigma related to hearing loss. In interviews with the research team, adults with hearing loss focused on the stigma related to hearing loss. As one person with hearing loss said:

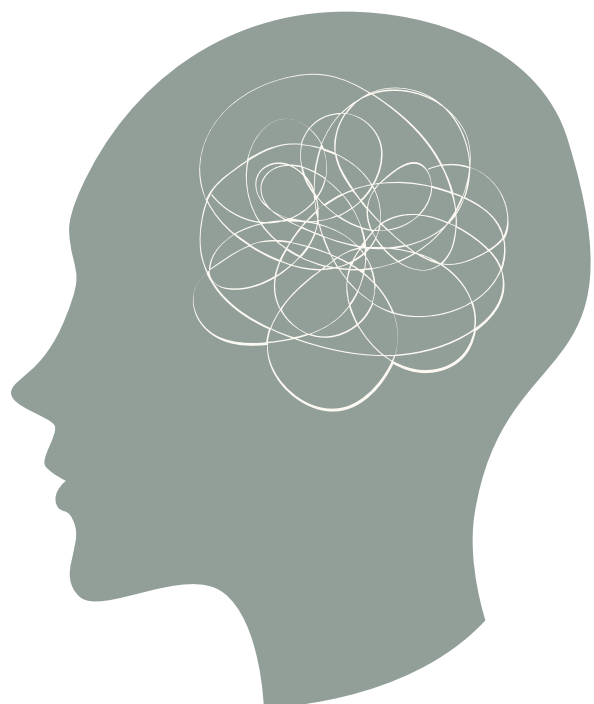
“Once they are aware that you can’t really comprehend or hear what they’re saying, they treat you different. And it’s not always positive, it’s quite often negative...”

“Even people who are familiar with you, my twin brother, he thinks that there’s something wrong with me because I can’t hear him properly. When he can hear perfectly fine. So it’s always there. It’s like you got acne or something.” [PHL21]

On the other hand, hearing care professionals focused on stigma related to hearing devices. As one hearing care professional said:

“There is still that sense of stigma with a hearing aid. Not so much with a hearing loss as much. I don’t think people are so worried about that. They’re more worried about having to have this device that people can see on their ears” [HCP7]

Another part of the study involved gathering video recordings of real-life everyday conversations with people with hearing loss and their families and friends. It was observed in the videos that people with hearing loss experience stigma through teasing from others about their hearing loss. This often seemed to happen when the person with hearing loss was having obvious difficulties hearing in conversation, for example when they have had to ask someone to repeat what was said more than once during the conversation. An example of this teasing can be seen in the box on the next page...



The Cost of Concealing

Box 1 – example of teasing a person with hearing loss in everyday conversation

In this conversation, Granddad is having afternoon tea with his extended family, including his wife (Grandma), son, and two granddaughters. The granddaughters have been talking about Disney princesses.

[Participant 15_Video 1_Tea 00:46]

01 Son: Who's Elsa Ariel and Jasmine?
02 Granddaughter 1: [Disney princesses.]

03 Granddaughter 2: [Disney princesses.]
04 (.)
05 Granddaughter 2: Hah hah
06 (0.4)
07 Granddad: Which princesses?
08 Granddaughter 1: Um
09 Granddaughter 2: Ah:
10 Son: Dis- Disney.
11 Granddaughter 1: Disney Princesses.
12 Granddad: Sydney?

13 Granddaughter 2: [DISNEY.]
14 Granddaughter 1: [DISNEY.]
15 (0.2)
16 Granddad: Oh Disney.
17 Granddaughter 1: Ye(h) ah.
18 Granddad: O(h)h.
**19 Grandma: You got your hearing aids in Grandpa?=
20 Granddad: =YES.**

21 Granddaughter 1: Heh.
22 Grandma: Ah.
23 Son: Hah hah hah hah hah

People with hearing loss who did not wear a hearing device were more likely to feel that others laughed about or treated their hearing loss as a joke. They were also more likely to feel frustrated, sad, or uncomfortable when people treated their hearing loss as a joke or laughed about it.

How adults with hearing loss manage stigma in everyday life:

People with hearing loss who did not wear hearing devices were less likely to tell others about their hearing loss. Instead, they were more likely to conceal their hearing loss and pretend to understand what had been said. Disclosure instead happened more often because others noticed their hearing difficulties. People who did not wear a hearing device were also more likely to report that they felt frustrated and/or embarrassed during a conversation due to their hearing difficulties. Some people with hearing loss (with and without hearing devices) used self-deprecating humour to manage the stigma in conversations with family and friends.

Our study found that adults with hearing loss who did not tell others about their hearing loss were not likely to obtain and wear a hearing device. Therefore, the decision to tell or not to tell was found to be a key indicator of those who experienced stigma related to their hearing loss.

What does this mean for how we talk about stigma related to hearing loss?

The results of this study show that people with hearing loss experience stigma related to their hearing loss, and not just hearing devices. Most hearing care professionals, however, believed stigma only related to the wearing of a visible hearing device. Hearing care professionals may thus need to change the way they talk about stigma and offer more counselling about everyday communication strategies that can help with managing the stigma of hearing loss in everyday life.

For people with hearing loss, telling others about their hearing loss may be one important step for overcoming stigma related to hearing loss and progressing their hearing rehabilitation. This can be confronting and challenging, however, and support from hearing care professionals, family, and friends may be needed. Greater public awareness about hearing loss and its impact on daily life will also help to overcome existing stereotypes associated with hearing loss and educate people further on how they can proactively help to create more hearing-friendly environments at home, work, and in public settings.

If you would like to hear more about this study, please contact
Dr Katie Ekberg:
k.ekberg@uq.edu.au.



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CREATE CHANGE

Emergency Planning

By Rick Thornton



Fire and Storm season is here and with it the possibility of power outages. These can be of short duration or, possibly, much longer depending on the event. If you rely on rechargeable batteries for your hearing and communication needs this can pose a problem. Sure, you may have the option of using disposable batteries for your processors but that requires a supply of them with resupply, doubtful in extreme times. They won't charge your phone or tablet either. We are encouraged to have plans for these events and your hearing and communication needs are an important part of that. The following may assist you in preparing that plan.

1. Make sure you keep your devices fully charged, especially during any weather or fire alerts.
2. Invest in a portable power bank. These can be charged and can recharge phones, etc a few times depending on capacity.
3. Consider a solar power bank that can be recharged using solar power. Look for those that charge electronic devices and have USB ports. Some of these can accept additional solar panels and can be strapped to backpacks, etc. (Very handy camping!)
4. Consider a car charger that can be used to recharge your devices. Always ensure you do not drain the car battery and that you have an appropriate plug.
5. Have a communication plan with your family, friends, neighbours about your hearing situation so they can help you if needed.
6. Keep your hearing appliances, spares, chargers and backup power sources in your emergency kit along with items to clean them and remove moisture.
7. CHECK periodically the levels of your backup power supplies and recharge as necessary.
8. Personally, I keep a spare usb charger, power bank, disposable batteries and portable dryer (with spare dry bricks), spare mic covers, cables for other devices and coil in mine. They are kept in my main emergency kit with water, first aid, medications and emergency food supply for 3 days. Try to keep it small and easily grabbed if you have to leave.

For more information on how to create an emergency plan, go to:

<https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/about-us/frontline-services/state-emergency-service>

<https://www.getready.qld.gov.au/>

<https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au>



The often asked question **TO INSURE OR NOT**

By Penny Phillips

For many people the question of how to insure their new processors becomes paramount when they become a Cochlear Implant recipient.

Warranty only covers certain situations - having a \$10,000 piece of equipment on your head or \$20,000 if you are bilateral is something to seriously consider!

The safest way to take care of your processor is to wear it/them from the time you wake until the time you go to bed, then they get popped into their dry box safely tucked away until the next day.

But, accidents happen, and if you have no insurance cover it could become an expensive item to replace.

Cochlear implant sound processors may at times require maintenance or repairs. External speech processors are generally covered by a standard manufacturer warranty, however it is recommended that the sound processor is insured against loss through your home and contents insurance.

Manufacturer's Warranty

This may cover your sound processor or parts if it becomes faulty. Contact your audiologist or clinic to discuss what options are available to you.

They may be able to arrange a loan of a sound processor while your device is sent back to the manufacturer for investigation.

If you meet the warranty conditions, you may be given a replacement sound processor.

Note that warranty conditions differ between brands and sound processors. Time limits apply and certain causes of damage may not be covered. You may also be asked to pay a set fee.

Contact your clinic in the first instance of any issues with your sound processor or parts. They will be able to advise you on the correct process for your brand of cochlear implant.



Cont..

Home & Contents Insurance

Many people add cochlear implant speech processors to their home and contents policies, but ensure you know exactly what is covered.

RACQ will provide cover for cochlear implant speech processors. If you have two and add both it will be approximately an extra \$35.63 a month and that is only to cover them in Australia and New Zealand. For just one the amount will reduce by half that figure.

It is important to contact your own insurance company and check out their specific policy information.

National Insurance Disability Scheme (NDIS)

NDIS may provide funding for cochlear implant sound processors for eligible participants aged 16 to 65 years. Contact your Local Area Coordinator or Plan Manager to discuss what is covered by your NDIS plan. For more information on eligibility guidelines visit www.ndis.gov.au

Veterans Affairs

If your hearing loss was notified during your service and accepted as service induced you may qualify for either a Gold Card or a White card for specific conditions. You can then apply through your hearing specialists to see if DVA will cover the provision, insertion and maintenance of the implants and processors. Your health fund should cover the surgery but this needs to be confirmed as well with your fund.

Travel Insurance

This is different and may be more expensive than home and contents insurance. Some insurers may want to insure your speech processor as a portable medical device, others as an electronic device. The cost to insure as a medical device can be a lot more than any other device, e.g. a camera for the same value as a CI, due to a perceived higher risk of losing a CI than a camera. Check your home and contents insurance first as it may cover your sound processors abroad.

Private Health Insurance

Can be taken out to cover the costs of cochlear implant surgery, the internal cochlear implant and the external sound processor. It may even cover the cost of upgrading your external sound processor, which may be every 3 years or every 5 years, depending on the provider. **



To Insure or Not

To find out more about private health insurance options in Australia, you can follow these general steps:

1. **Research Insurance Providers:** Look for private health insurance companies in Australia that offer coverage for medical devices and hearing aids. Some popular include Medibank Private, Bupa, HCF, and NIB. You can visit their websites or contact them directly to inquire about coverage options for cochlear implants.

2. **Check Your Existing Health Insurance:** If you already have health insurance, review your policy or contact your insurance provider to check if cochlear implant processors are covered. Some health insurance plans may include coverage for hearing aids or assistive devices. If your current policy does not cover them, consider switching to a plan that does.

3. **Understand the Coverage Details:** When researching insurance providers, make sure to understand the specific details of the coverage they offer. Check for any exclusions or limitations that may apply to cochlear implants. It is important to know what expenses are covered such as hospital and surgical costs, as well as upgrades of the external sound processor.

4. **Compare Policies:** Obtain quotes and compare policies from different insurance providers to find the one that best suits your needs and budget. Consider factors such as premiums, coverage limits, waiting periods, and customer reviews.

5. **Provide Documentation:** When applying for insurance coverage, you may need to provide documentation related to your cochlear implants, such as proof of purchase, serial numbers, and any relevant medical reports or prescriptions. Make sure to gather all the necessary paperwork to facilitate the insurance process.

6. **Submit Application:** Once you have selected an insurance provider, complete the application process according to their requirements. This may involve filling out an application form, providing the necessary documents, and paying the premiums.

7. **Review Policy Terms:** After obtaining coverage, carefully review the terms and conditions of your policy. Familiarize yourself with the claim process, coverage limits, deductibles, and any other relevant information. Keep a copy of your policy documents in a safe place for future reference.

8. **File Claims:** Follow the insurance companies claim process. This usually involves notifying the insurer, completing claim forms, and providing any supporting documentation. Your audiologist should assist you with this process



*

It is important to note that the specific insurance options and processes may vary between insurance providers. This information is intended as a guide only. While we have taken care to ensure the above information is correct, we recommended contacting insurance companies directly to get the most accurate and up-to-date information about insuring your cochlear implant sound processors. Always read the terms and conditions carefully so you understand your insurance policy and what it covers.

**

Private health insurance generally covers cochlear implantation and upgrades and does not provide insurance cover for accidents, damage or loss to your external sound processor. It may not cover repairs or replacement of the sound processor.



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LINDSAY CREIGHTON

Members Stories

“Great, everyone sounded like Donald Duck”

I am Lindsay Creighton, born in Brisbane Qld, 13th January 1955 at the Auchenflower maternity hospital, located where the Wesley Hospital is now or thereabouts. I went to school until year 10 (Corinda, Oxley and Collinsville Primary Schools and Oxley and Emerald High Schools). I could not wait to get out of school and started an apprenticeship in February 1972 as an apprentice Fitter & Turner. I completed my apprenticeship initially in an open cut Coal Mine (Goonyella mine). I was the very first apprentice engaged. Due to accommodation problems my dad arranged for my apprentice indenture to be transferred to Qld Rail in Ipswich and I started there early 1973 and worked at Ipswich, Redmond and Mayne Junction workshops until I completed my apprenticeship in early 1975. I had been learning to play guitar since year 8 of high school and dreamed of becoming a rock star.

I was accepted into a band in 1974 (FROOT) and on the first gig where I played with the band met a young lady who I thought was quite nice and got to know her better. My role in the band was rhythm guitar and vocals. Well, long story short I am still married to that girl (Robyn) today. We were married Nov 1975 at Indooroopilly. We decided to go to Blackwater Qld, west of Rockhampton where I accepted a job as an underground Fitter and Robyn was working as an admin for the electricity board.

I joined another band during this time with the same role. I also got involved as a volunteer Mines Rescue Member which I continued until 2017. I also got myself elected as the trades union shop steward at the mine where I worked and there were some turbulent times.



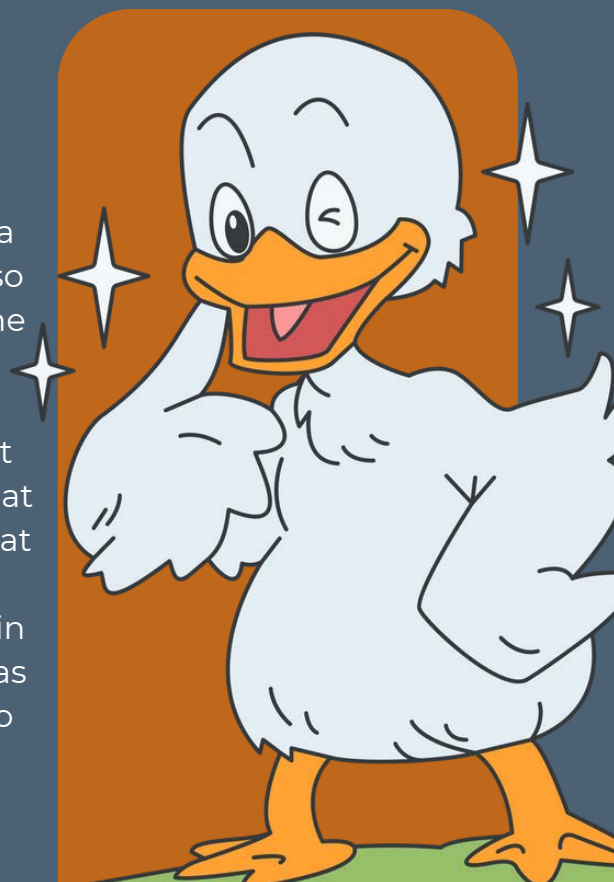
I also decided to study to become a mine Deputy and achieved that when returning to Brisbane (Durack Village) to start a new job in the West Moreton coal mines as a Deputy. Our first son Daniel had graced us with his presence in 1980 and younger son in 1984. We moved to West Australia (Collie) where I started work as a Mines rescue and safety training officer and would stay there until 1994 where I was retrenched due to underground mines closing.

So, back to Queensland and Blackwater as a deputy and then to Moranbah again as a deputy and studying to become an under manager which I achieved in 1999. I worked as site emergency response coordinator and part time as a Fire Fighter with Qld Fire and Rescue Service. I Retired as a fire in 2016 at rank of Lieutenant. That period of time was a lot of fun and I have many good memories. I also moved on to be an operations manager at Qld Mines Rescue Service in Dysart, attending the Pike River disaster as part of the response team 2010. I rounded out my career as Site Superintendent at Eagle Downs coal constructing a new mine which still has not been completed and was retrenched 2016.

I have worked as an abn holder hiring my skills to those who sought my services and announced my retirement 2019 and now reside in Airlie Beach.

Regarding my hearing, I was diagnosed with sclerosis of the stapes (right side) around 2007, and was recommended to have a stapedectomy which gave no benefit so I was on my way to hearing aids which I got in 2011. Hearing aids were of some help but I soon learned they had their limitations and there was a lack of advice on how to get the best from them, but I coped and figured out some tricks myself. In October 2022 I found that my right ear had stopped listening altogether for no apparent reason. After a trip to Brisbane to see specialists, treated with steroid injection through ear drum (that is an experience) and told there was no belief it would work, it was suggested I see cochlear implant people.

I saw the Attune cochlear team in Brisbane who armed me with a lot of info and paperwork and some advice. I returned to the Attune cochlear centre in Brisbane in January 2023 to complete my assessment and was told a cochlear implant was probably my best option. I was also given some options as to which doctor may complete the cochlear implant both in Brisbane and in Townsville. I researched the Townsville option and received nothing but glowing recommendations so I figured I would meet with the doctor, check out his manner and see where that ends up. That was probably one of the best decisions that I have made. Dr Anderson is an absolute treasure of a bloke and after more assessments the Dr told me to be in Townsville on June 15th 2023 for a cochlear implant. I was out the 16th of June and home on the 18th. Then back to see the Dr on 24th of June and switch on with Anita at Attune Townsville on the 27th.



Great, everyone sounded like Donald Duck!!! Anita set my rehab which I did follow and Donald Duck evaporated (Thank Goodness) and only the female news readers still sound like Donald (and maybe they always did anyhow!!). I have been doing audio books which I have enjoyed even though I have not been an avid reader. I started with *Mark Donaldson VC, Jimmie Barnes' Workin' Class Man, The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F**** (not favourite) to *Jack Reacher* which I also enjoyed. I have continued using the *Hearoes App* as well as *Meludia* for rehab. I still do some work for people from home based in Health and Safety and they are amazed that my hearing has improved to the level it has. I am approaching my 6 month review in November so will see the Dr and Anita at Attune. At home I am finding clanging eating utensils against plates or similar is a very annoying and loud sound and have had to ask my wife to refrain from shouting at me during normal speech, but it is ok to yell at me when I upset you (just a little bit)

I am attempting to pick up my guitar again and get back into shape and have some fun. I have hooked up with a mate from our Car club who plays guitar and says he is sick of playing on his own and also sick of playing with his son as they have different music tastes. I am looking forward to achieving that, not necessarily to get into a band, but to join an informal group of players for fun. I have also continued working as a volunteer JP in the community at the courthouse in Proserpine and am surprised that I am coping quite well. I feared that I might struggle talking to people in the JP Role and I had said that I would cease my face to face training that I was doing because I lacked confidence that I could still do training. I now think that I could comfortably get back into training but I would put limits on that if it was offered.

Am I happy with the Cochlear Implant? Emphatically Yes. I am also happy with Dr Anderson and his team who have been absolutely outstanding. Anita Blackwood at Attune in Townsville is an absolute treasure and her guidance is top notch and I thank her and the support staff very much. My journey has been a relatively short one but I am pleased with what has been achieved and no, I did not get my birth hearing replaced to how it was but I got the best outcome that is available today and have no regrets. I have met John Ross who hooked up with me during my assessments etc., and also John Foreman CICADA Queensland Townsville Coordinator, and made some new friends along the way. To John and John, I say thanks sincerely for the friendship.



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For more information or assistance with your upgrade, email upgradesupportanz@cochlear.com

[^] Compared to previous generation Nucleus 7 and Nucleus 6 Sound Processors. [~] Comparison made using a Compact Battery Module with the Nucleus 8 Sound Processor and the Nucleus 6 (CP910) Sound Processor. [#] Comparison made using the Compact Battery Module for Nucleus 8 Sound Processor and the Compact Rechargeable Battery for Nucleus 7 Sound Processor. [¥] When the technology becomes available for the Cochlear Nucleus 8 Sound Processor, a firmware update to your sound processor will allow you to connect to Bluetooth LE Audio compatible devices. [†] ForwardFocus is a clinician-enabled feature that can be user-controlled or automated. ^{**} Compared to Nucleus 7 Sound Processor with ForwardFocus on. ^{*} The Cochlear Nucleus 8 Sound Processor is compatible with Apple and Android devices. The Cochlear Nucleus Smart App is available on App Store and Google Play. For compatibility information visit www.cochlear.com/compatibility. [%] For information regarding the sound processors, implants, operating systems and devices that are compatible with Cochlear's Remote Care services, visit www.cochlear.com/compatibility.

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Please seek advice from your health professional about treatments for hearing loss. Outcomes may vary, and your health professional will advise you about the factors which could affect your outcome. Always follow the directions for use. Not all products are available in all countries. Please contact your local Cochlear representative for product information. In Australia, Cochlear Nucleus implant systems are intended for treatment of moderately severe to profound hearing loss. For Cochlear Nucleus systems: This product is not available for purchase by the general public. For information on funding and reimbursement please contact your healthcare professional.

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2023 Round-up

2023 was the year CICADA Queensland hit the ground running after successfully becoming Incorporated. President John Ross set off on an epic trip around the state, bringing CICADA Queensland to each of the Regional Disability Expos, assisted by some of our local area coordinators. Many new connections were made and CICADA Queensland was put on the map as a leading source of support and information for people living with hearing loss, cochlear implants, and potential recipients.

2023 was also the year we expanded and welcomed new faces to the team: Angela Jonassen in Brisbane, John Foreman in Townsville, and Sarah Waldock in Bundaberg. Branching out into regional areas has enabled us to create new opportunities for cochlear implant recipients to connect with others in their local area. For those who are considering a cochlear implant, it is a space to come for impartial information and meet people who have gone through the process.

We continue to develop our relationships with Cochlear Implant manufacturers, audiologists, and other hearing health professionals, and have held presentations and seminars across the state, providing access to the latest information on a range of topics including cochlear implant surgery, rehabilitation, and assistive technology.



Attendees at the Christmas Party

We rounded off 2023 with our annual Christmas party, with guest speaker Laura Drexler talking about The Ambient Menu - a fantastic initiative that provides a guide to acoustically-friendly eateries for people who struggle to hear in background noise. We also gave thanks to long-time CICADA Queensland volunteer and Brisbane Northside area coordinator Gail Anderson.



Penny Phillips and Gail Anderson

CICADA Queensland would like to express our gratitude to everyone who gave up their free time to make 2023 an incredible year, and we look forward to continuing our mission to provide a source of information and support to cochlear implant recipients and people living with hearing loss in 2024.



EAR TO THE GROUND...



Rob Frith

DARLING DOWNS

MeetUps in 2023 were held every month except for December - our last meeting of the year was our Christmas Party in November. Attendance varied throughout the year,

with the maximum attendance being 21 and the average being 13.

Two special events were held. The first in April was presented by Dr Tristan Allsopp, a well-known and respected ENT surgeon in Toowoomba. Tristan gave insight into the entire process of surgically inserting the implant, explaining the risks and the mitigation measures to minimise if not eliminate them. It was a fascinating talk and well received.

The second event equally well received was an update on the Cochlear Implant Processors. Representatives from Cochlear and Med-El formed a panel and responded to questions from the attendees and in the process gave an entertaining and informative presentation. Both special events were well attended.

It is particularly rewarding to see that referrals to CICADA Queensland from both ENT surgeons and audiologists throughout the year have resulted in a steady growth in attendance numbers. Members are starting to form close bonds with each other, in offering support both to those looking into undertaking the journey to being a cochlear implant recipient and to those already having an implant. The care and encouragement being offered by all those attending is enriching and makes me proud to call the Darling Downs members my friends.

Next meet up will be the 29 January, 2024. As with last year, this will simply be a social occasion and a time to reflect on the upcoming year. I would ask all those attending to come with ideas and requests to make 2024 as rewarding as 2023.

Rob



Attendees at the presentation by Dr Tristan Allsopp



Ange Jonassen

BRISBANE

2023 saw the return of our Sunday social gatherings at Roma Street Parklands, as well as a new Saturday morning MeetUp at Chermside Library.

This new venue has been well received and we look forward to more weekend events in 2024.

Welcome to our new area coordinator, Ange!

GOLD COAST

Helen Court, audiologist for MED-EL and CICADA Queensland committee member, hosted our 2023 MeetUps for cochlear implant recipients on the Gold Coast. Watch this space for more info on what we have in store for the Gold Coast in 2024!

EAR TO THE GROUND...



Judith Raxworthy

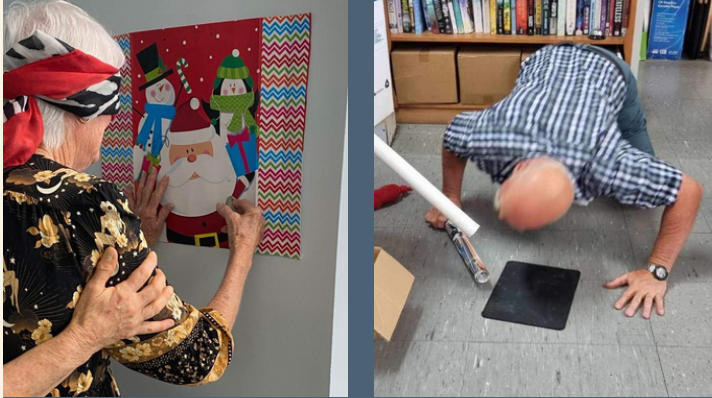
FRASER COAST

Our group has met every month this year, with an average attendance of 8. We have also welcomed 4 new members.

We have enjoyed presentations hosted by

special guests from MED-EL and Cochlear. Our new venue at the Halcro Community Centre is proving to be a great location for our Meet-Ups. We rounded off the year with a Christmas afternoon tea and fun games.

Judy



Christmas celebrations on the Fraser Coast



Penny Phillips

SUNSHINE COAST

We had an excellent year within the Sunshine Coast group, attendance was up on last year and we had some interesting presentations from Advanced Bionics, Cochlear Ltd, Better Hearing,

and Gillian Bartholomew, a Counsellor and therapy assistant for the Deaf.

Thanks must go to John for setting up the captioning and handling all the IT issues on the day and for helpers Jenny and Jamie for their organising and welcoming of new and old members. This help is invaluable and so much appreciated.

In 2024 we will be at the same place, the Waterfront Hotel, and a list of dates will be on the calendar shortly at www.cicadaqlld.org

I look forward to seeing you all in 2024,
Penny



Judy and the Fraser Coast group

EAR TO THE GROUND...

TOWNSVILLE



John Foreman

We commenced our Townsville MeetUps with a Rehabilitation Seminar in February, joined by Rebecca Claridge from MED-EL. This was followed by MeetUps each third Thursday of the month. In May, our President John Ross was here as it coincided with the Regional Disability Expo at the Townsville Stadium. I assisted John Ross on the CICADA Queensland information stand at the Cairns, Townsville, and Mackay Expos and we travelled in my Winnebago.

In August, Victoria Tse from Advanced Bionics presented the listening app HearingSuccess and gave us some tips on how to hear better in noisy situations and how to pick up the bits of a conversation that we did not understand.

In November, we had Iva Djular from Cochlear Ltd give us a presentation on how the CI works and an update on Cochlear. We then had a Christmas lunch together.

We have had five members and visitors (from Townsville, Airlie Beach, Cairns and Mount Isa) who have been implanted with a CI this year and we have mentored them on their journey to better hearing.

We will have a break from MeetUps until March 2024. We will meet in the Boardroom at the Townsville RSL on the third Thursday of each month next year.

Let's support one another in our hearing journey. Helping one person may not change the whole world, but it could change the world for one person.

John

INTRODUCING...

BUNDABERG



Sarah Waldock

Welcome to our new Area Coordinator for Bundaberg, Sarah Waldock. Sarah is a specialist Audiologist who owns her own independent Audiology practice in Bundaberg. Sarah has thirteen years of clinical experience and has a wide range of clinical skills including working with complex adult hearing loss clients, training new intern Audiologists, running specialist training courses and was a clinical trainer supporting over 60 clinicians across QLD and NT for six years.

She is also a local Bundy girl who was born in Bundaberg, grew up on a farm, completed 2 degrees at the University of Queensland, lived in Ireland, travelled 26 countries and settled back in Bundaberg to raise a family.

Sarah created Bundaberg Hearing (Specialist Audiology Practice) so she could utilise her speciality skills working with complex hearing clients to help meet the hearing needs of Bundaberg & Wide Bay residents. This is what led her to connect with CICADA Queensland to begin with. Sarah has a desire to create and grow a CICADA Queensland support group in Bundaberg to better help and support her fellow residents with hearing loss who are considering or already have a Cochlear Implant.

To connect with one of our Area Coordinators, or enquire about attending an event, head to our website and leave us a message:

<https://cicadaqld.org/contact>



Personalised support on your journey to better hearing.

Connect with the MED-EL Engagement Team

- Are you considering new hearing technology?
- Do you have questions about implant technology, or funding options?
- Curious about the MED-EL Difference?

We've been looking after Australians for almost 20 years, and can provide you or your loved ones with personalised information, resources and support to help you make an informed choice.



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FROM SINGLE-SIDED DEAFNESS TO STEREO HEARING: KYLIE'S STORY

My name is Kylie and I live in Perth, WA. I'm a mother of two, an occupational therapist, and a singer. Despite my hearing loss, music is my number one hobby. In my free time, I love to play the piano, crochet, do yoga, and play tennis.

My hearing loss was sudden. I woke up deaf in one ear, but didn't notice immediately as I was also nauseous and dizzy, and I felt very unwell in general. All these symptoms were caused by an inner ear infection, which caused damage to my cochlea (*not typical for this type of infection*). **I then found out that my hearing loss would be permanent...**

....It was a real shock to be diagnosed with single-sided deafness (*unilateral hearing loss*) at the age of 38.



“ When I'm performing, my hearing with a cochlear implant is 98% of my natural hearing. When I'm at work or at home, my CI hearing is indistinguishable from my natural hearing. ”

I tried to live around my hearing loss in the months following, constantly hoping for improvement that would never come. When an ENT recommended that I get a cochlear implant, I took some time to do some research. This was when I discovered the Hearpeers forum. I was able to speak to cochlear implant users online who shared their personal experiences with me, which was a very helpful part of my research and ultimately aided my decision to get a cochlear implant.

When I lost my hearing, my biggest fear was that I wouldn't be able to sing and make music again. This was my biggest motivation in pursuing a solution through technology... I could not imagine my life without music!

With my cochlear implant, I'm much more flexible in daily life now. I don't have to adapt just because of my hearing loss; I can easily communicate at work, and meeting friends and family has become much easier. My CI helps me live a more relaxed life.

[Read more about Kylie's story on the MED-EL Blog - blog.medel.com](https://blog.medel.com)

Want to Ask Kylie a Question?

Hearpeers is the place where you can connect with others who have hearing loss, share experiences, and learn more about hearing solutions.



Connect with Kylie today!

“I'm a Hearpeers mentor because I want to help others with hearing loss get the answers & the reassurance they need. If you are looking for support for yourself or someone you might know, just scan the QR code to connect with me.”



HAVE YOUR SAY...

TOLERATION

By Rick Thornton



Someone decided that I have a disability.

I am deaf. However, I now have 2 cochlear implants so I am not deaf (when I want to hear) and deaf (when I do not). I can also adjust my hearing to suit my environment which hearing people cannot. So am I hearing, deaf or partially deaf or partially hearing or just awesome? It is all semantics and people can get so weird about it. I'm just me! They seem to think there is something wrong with me or judge me as somehow less. I think lack of knowledge is part of it but one thing is missing, and rather than learn about these things, people are just intolerant of others not exactly the same as them. They can be quite hurtful sometimes or just plain rude. They seldom see or acknowledge their own ignorance. The questions they ask can be mind bending.

"Can you hear like Steve Austin?" (The 6 Million Dollar Man-remember him?)

"Does it hurt or bleed when you take them out?"

"Are you like Lt Data now?"

"Oh my God, it's the Borg!"

"Can you drive?"

"Are you safe to be in the workshop?"

"I'm sorry."

"What?" * (I particularly hate this one as it is so overdone!)

I mean really, how did these people get to be as old as they are?

I have been watching an ABC show on iView (1) named "You Can't Ask That" where groups of people are presented with questions of any kind. You know - you can't ask that! (kind of question).

My favourite episode is the one with blind people. One of the panel is a gentleman who was actually our Disability Commissioner for a time. Very articulate and clever. He got the first question "Is it always black?". I cringed at that one. His answer was terrific. He said he couldn't answer as he had never seen anything, so had no concept of what black was or any colour for that matter. "It is not that I can't see", he said. I simply DON'T see. It is not part of me or my life." That answer sorted a lot of things for me and kind of put "disabled" in a new light.

There are episodes with Deaf folk, drug dependent, porn stars, diverse Australians, gay people, mentally ill, autism, Paralympians, Downs Syndrome, wheelchair users, dementia, etc. Some responses are quite blunt but, in the main, thoughtful and enlightening. Diversity is beautiful. It just needs one simple thing so we can all just exist together.

In the words of Paul Harris (founder of Rotary), "If I could say but one word, I would scream it from the rooftops. Toleration!" That's all, just be tolerant. Everyone has their own normal and have a right to respect and assistance if they need it. Tolerance makes life so easy for everyone.

The only thing I can't do is hair. So be tolerant. Bald can also be beautiful and sexy!

**Acknowledgements: You Can't Ask That! ABC iVIEW*

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Visit HearingSuccess.com today and register. This library of rehabilitation resources helps you to hear, understand, learn and connect to the people you love.

HearingSuccess is 100% free to everyone even if you're not implanted with Advanced Bionics. It is accessible from any device, anytime, anywhere.

Scan the QR code to access

HearingSuccess.com





WHO WE ARE

CICADA Queensland is a completely independent, not-for-profit organisation staffed by volunteers.

We support people from all walks of life who have been affected by hearing loss, including current and prospective cochlear implant recipients and hearing aid users. Whether you identify as Deaf or Hard of Hearing, use Auslan or spoken language as your primary method of communication, or simply need some support for yourself, family or friends, CICADA Queensland is here to help you navigate this journey!

VISION STATEMENT

To ensure all Queenslanders, of all ages, affected by hearing loss or considering or using Cochlear implants, and their families are supported and informed.

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide education, rehabilitation support and opportunities for social engagement in a community to all people with hearing loss or those considering or using cochlear implants, including their friends and family.

VOLUNTEER WITH US

Would you like to host a CICADA Queensland group in your local area?

Can you spare a few hours a month to hold a regular MeetUp?

We are looking for friendly, outgoing people with a passion for supporting people with hearing loss, cochlear implant users and prospective cochlear implant recipients.

Good with technology? We need volunteers to assist with social media, graphic design, digital content and technical assistance.

Are you a business with a venue or room suitable for our MeetUps?

If any of the above apply, please contact us.

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