

# CICADA CHORUS

SHARE | LISTEN | CONNECT

AUTUMN 2025



## THE COCHLEAR IMPLANT JOURNEY

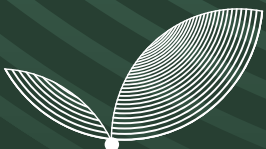
A new way to hear

## 10 LESSONS FROM MY CI JOURNEY

by Robert Webber

## LET'S GET PRACTICAL

About Rehabilitation



CICADA  
QUEENSLAND  
SHARE - LISTEN - CONNECT



## SHARE

- Support and assistance for hearing implant recipients and anyone affected by hearing loss.
- Independent information on all hearing technology options.
- CICADA Chorus magazine and regular newsletters.

## LISTEN

- Hearing implant rehabilitation seminars.
- Listening resources for all brands of hearing implants.
- Education and advocacy on hearing loss issues.

## CONNECT

- Hearing Solutions Summits - educating and connecting professionals with hearing implant candidates.
- Regular social meet-ups with a CICADA Qld group in your local area.
- Morning teas and larger events.
- Virtual chats - connect with us from any location.

**You are not alone –  
Meet others on a similar journey**

**Contact us:**

[connect@cicadaqld.org](mailto:connect@cicadaqld.org)





# PRESIDENTS DESK



What an incredible start to 2025! CICADA Queensland has hit the ground running this year, exhibiting at expos across the state and engaging with over 1,000 people. At every event, we've been the sole voice for hearing loss, often meeting individuals with profound loss who had no idea implantable hearing solutions even exist.

We've also connected with many families and couples struggling with hearing loss, including those who've given up on hearing aids.

Time and again, we've been told how valuable and informative our presence is. A heartfelt thanks to everyone who's joined me at the stands - it truly makes a difference.

We're looking forward to more events throughout the year. Keep an eye on our website for upcoming expos in Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, the Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba, and Maryborough. If you're nearby, or know someone who is, please spread the word!

A recent highlight was exhibiting and presenting at the Audiology Australia 2025 Conference, attended by over a quarter of the nation's audiologists. Despite being held in South Australia, we built strong connections with Queensland professionals. Congratulations to Professor Piers Dawes and his team from the University of Queensland for their powerful research on hearing loss in Australia. Thank you to CICADA Qld members who contributed - we look forward to future collaboration.

This past year, I stepped out of my comfort zone to write *Breeding a Deaf Generation*. The book reflects on the rising rates of hearing loss and our parallel journey with sound technology, and serves as a thank you to the audiology professionals who support us all.

We're planning to expand our events and support offerings across Queensland in response to growing demand from hearing professionals in regional areas. This reinforces the need for improved access to hearing services, aged care, and NDIS support outside major cities.

Finally, a warm thank you to Laura Drexler for her service on our Committee, and congratulations on the national rollout of the Ambient Menu! We welcome Russ Ezzy (policy and funding) and Jody Wallace (event management) to the team.

To our incredible MeetUp coordinators and volunteers - you are the heart of CICADA Qld. Thank you for all you do.

Here's to another impactful year ahead.

**John Ross, President**

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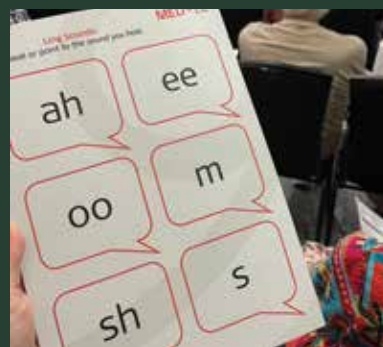
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# THE COCHLEAR IMPLANT JOURNEY

Have you ever found yourself nodding through a conversation, not because you understood, but because you didn't want to ask someone to repeat themselves again? If that rings true, you're not alone. For many people with significant hearing loss, hearing aids eventually reach their limits. When louder isn't clearer, a cochlear implant may offer a new way forward.

## When Hearing Aids Aren't Enough

Hearing aids help many people by making the sounds they hear louder. Unfortunately, as hearing loss progresses, sounds need to be made clearer. Cochlear implants work differently: instead of amplifying sound, they bypass damaged parts of the inner ear and deliver sound signals directly to the hearing nerve. The result is often clearer, more intelligible sound, even in complex listening environments.

Many adults who switch from hearing aids to cochlear implants report significantly improved speech understanding and higher satisfaction, particularly in noisy settings.

## Could This Be the Right Option for You?

### Ask yourself:

- Do you have difficulty hearing conversations, especially in noisy places?
- Do you often ask people to repeat themselves?
- Are you relying more on lip-reading or others to interpret what's said?
- Do you struggle with phone conversations?
- Do you have little or no hearing in one ear?

If you answered "yes" to one or more of these, you may be a candidate for a cochlear implant. An evaluation with a hearing implant specialist is the best way to explore your options.

## How Cochlear Implants Work

Cochlear implant systems typically include two components:

- An external sound processor that sits behind the ear and captures sound from the environment.
- An internal implant, surgically placed under the skin, that sends signals directly to the auditory nerve.

## How the process works:

1. Microphones in the sound processor pick up sound.
2. The sound is converted into a digital signal.
3. This signal is transmitted to the implant.
4. The implant stimulates the hearing nerve, which sends the sound to your brain.

While it doesn't restore hearing exactly as it was, it offers a different and often clearer way of hearing, especially for people who no longer benefit enough from hearing aids.

## The Cochlear Implant Journey

Getting a cochlear implant is a step-by-step process that typically includes the following:

### 1. Evaluation

Your hearing is assessed by an audiologist or hearing implant clinic. This includes hearing tests and often imaging (like an MRI or CT scan) to confirm suitability.

### 2. Surgery

The implant is placed under general anaesthesia. The surgery is usually completed in a few hours, as an outpatient procedure.

### 3. Activation

A few weeks after surgery, your external sound processor is fitted and turned on. This "activation day" marks the beginning of your new hearing experience.

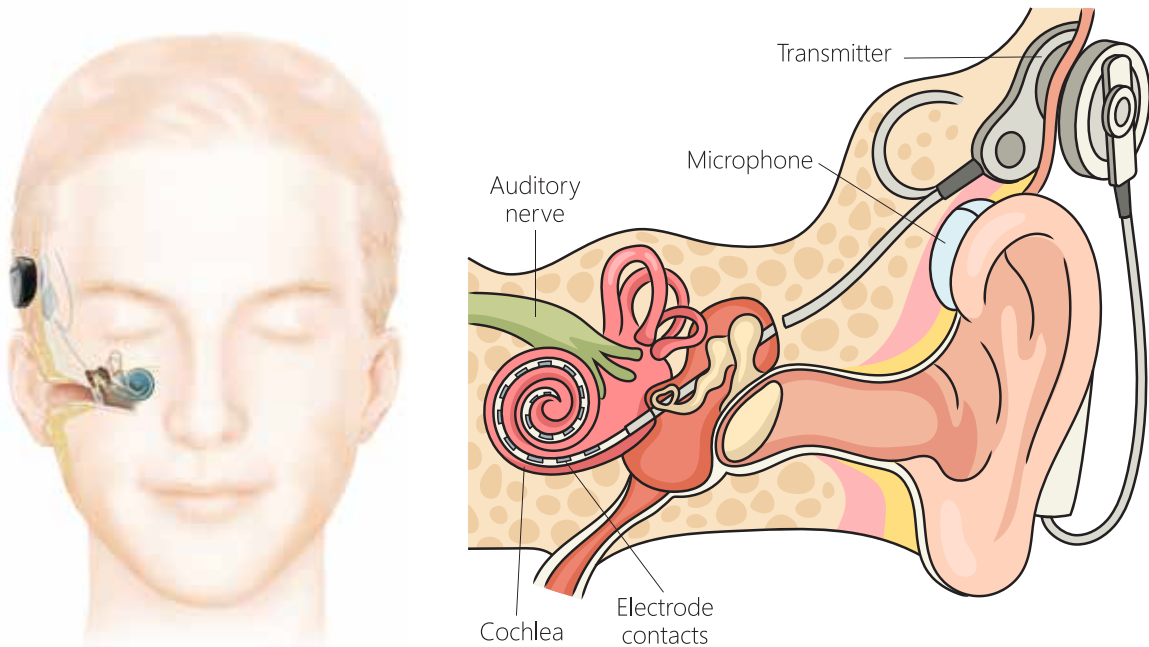
### 4. Follow-up & Rehabilitation

Over the next few months you'll work with your audiologist to fine-tune your device. It takes time and practice to adjust to the new way of hearing, but many people notice improvements quite quickly. Support from peer groups can be incredibly valuable during this period.

## What About Cost?

Cochlear implants may be covered through the public health system or Medicare, government programs and private health insurance (hospital cover):

- Public Health System: State Governments fund cochlear implants for adults each year. The number in each state varies and waiting lists may apply.



- Private Health Insurance may cover part or all of the implant, processor, and surgical costs, depending on your level of coverage.
- Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA) may provide full coverage for eligible individuals.

### A New Chapter in Hearing

For many, receiving a cochlear implant is life-changing. It means reconnecting with loved ones, participating in conversations, and reducing the

fatigue and frustration of straining to hear.

Whether you've recently noticed your hearing declining, or you've lived with hearing loss for many years, a cochlear implant might be the next step in your hearing journey. A consultation with a qualified hearing professional is the best way to explore what's possible.

Contact [hearinghelp@cochlear.com](mailto:hearinghelp@cochlear.com) to discuss your options with The Cochlear Engagement Team.

*This article was produced with permission from Cochlear Ltd.*

## Frustrated by Noisy Restaurants?

Then use the guide based on noise level / ambience.



Quiet

**Search:** For an eatery based on noise level.

**Review:** Eateries based on ambience, food + service.

**Reward:** 25 reviews = \$50 Restaurant Voucher.



Lively



Ambient Menu  
ambientmenu.com.au





is the

# Number 1 Healthcare Company

on Newsweek's

**'World's Most Trustworthy  
Companies 2024'**



# Cochlear ranks #1

## World's Most Trustworthy Company in Healthcare

Cochlear has been named the World's #1 Most Trustworthy Company in the healthcare industry. This recognition comes from Newsweek in its 2024 global rankings of companies.

For those with cochlear implants, this is especially meaningful. Trust is essential when it comes to your hearing journey. Knowing that Cochlear has been recognised for its integrity, quality products, and strong support network offers an extra layer of reassurance.

**"As someone with a cochlear implant, I know firsthand the importance of trusting the company that provides my hearing technology,"**



says Gael Hannan, an advocate for people with hearing loss. Gael is also the author of *The Way I Hear It: A Life with Hearing Loss* and *Hear & Beyond: Live Skilfully with Hearing Loss* (with Shari Eberts).

The Newsweek ranking was conducted independently in collaboration with global data research firm Statista and evaluated companies based on customer, investor, and employee trust. More than 70,000 participants provided 269,000 evaluations highlighting Cochlear's exceptional reputation and dedication to improving the lives of those with hearing loss.

Award criteria included producing quality products, fair treatment of employees, and effective leadership.

Trust is critical when you're placing your hearing in the hands of technology. This award highlights Cochlear's dedication to providing reliable products, excellent care and ongoing support.

### To support recipients, Cochlear offers:

- Rehabilitation programs through the Connected Care program
- Partnerships with audiologists to ensure recipients receive expert care
- Access to the largest hearing implant community in the world so recipients can connect and share experiences.

This recognition also brings attention to the importance of addressing hearing loss. If you know someone who may be struggling with their hearing, encourage them to seek help; be their advocate.

**Cochlear's new hearing quiz, available on the website is a quick and easy way to assess hearing health in just 7 questions. Share it with friends and family to raise awareness and encourage early action.**

**For more information about our services and solutions, visit [www.cochlear.com.au](http://www.cochlear.com.au)**

# 10 LESSONS

## FROM MY COCHLEAR IMPLANT JOURNEY

By Robert Webber

I was appalled when my audiologist told me some years ago that she could see a cochlear impact on my horizon. Surely it would not come to this. Good grief, getting hearing aids in 2016 was traumatic enough because I saw it as another step in the process of visibly becoming old!

But it didn't take long for me to embrace my hearing aids as daily frustrations with my hearing loss crept up on me.

I finally decided to investigate getting an implant after attending an author's talk by William McInnes, a renowned storyteller. I did not understand one complete sentence he spoke while everyone else in the audience was laughing, as story after story was told, and they were having a very fine time, thank you very much.

Thus, at the beginning of 2024, before I had ever met anyone who had a CI, I initiated the discussion with my audiologist about the value of getting an implant. By August I was implanted.

It was only after being implanted that I appreciated the severity of my hearing loss. My keyboard & TV remote click! I didn't realise that swallows chirp all the time when they fly, cicadas can even be heard from inside a car driving through the bush.

At the start of my journey I thought there was only one brand of CI and it was a revelation to know that there were three providers in Australia and that the consumer is expected to make the choice.

I think it is fair to describe the journey to a CI as akin to navigating a maze.

Here is what I learnt on my journey.

### LESSONS

#### 1. A CI opens a new world of sound - sounds I have never heard or had forgotten they existed

A hearing aid can magnify the frequencies an ear can hear but will not access the frequencies it can't. With hearing aids I suffered, as did the people around me, as I could not hear enough of what was being said, let alone sounds from the environment.

After six months with a CI my word recognition has improved significantly and the daily frustrations with my hearing are minimal and more easily dealt with.

#### 2. A CI will not restore your hearing

I've worn spectacles since I was ten years old and each adjustment to my prescription by an optometrist enables me to see as clearly as most people.



*Celebrating activation with my wife, Jenny, 31 July at the Powerhouse.*

A CI brought more sound into my world but my hearing will never be that of a person without a hearing disability. I can never assume that I will hear what other people are hearing.

I still benefit from the tools I have needed to use over many years, including lip reading, using closed captions on TV and understanding specific words when I hear them in context.

#### 3. Speak with as many CI users as you can

I could not be happier with the support I have received from my audiologist and ENT surgeon but neither of them have a CI.

Until I went to a CICADA Queensland event I had never met anyone with a CI. That encounter was a revelation to me and I followed up by attending more meetings and having chats with CI mentors associated with Advanced Bionics, Cochlear and MED-EL.

Only someone with a CI can tell you what it is like on a daily basis to live with one and how to deal with real world situations from losing residual hearing to managing long distance travel with an implant.

#### 4. Appreciate that it is a personal journey

Although I had much in common with the CI users I spoke with, no one could tell me what my journey would be like. Many factors contribute to make each journey unique, including the nature of our hearing loss, age, interests, daily activities, type and frequency of interactions with people, general health and how we respond to CI surgery.

The corollary of this is to be wary of advice. Every



day on FaceBook someone will ask the question, which is the best CI? I don't believe that anyone can answer this question in terms of what will provide the best or most natural sound.

Each of the mentors and implantees I have spoken with has been happy with their decision in regard to getting a CI and with the brand of processor they chose.

## **5. You will have a support team - ENT surgeon, audiologist, CI provider, family and friends**

The support and insights I have gained from my CI team has been exceptionally good, and each has provided a different perspective.

I am most grateful for the ongoing relationship I have with my audiologist and the CI provider. Living with a CI means a life of ongoing tinkering with frequent mappings and adapting technologies.

Unless there is a complication I am unlikely to see my ENT surgeon again but I know he is there if I need him.

It is also important to develop and engage the support of family and friends. They will need to be told how they can best help and their assistance will be invaluable.

## **6. Find reliable resources**

There is too much information, and misinformation, on the web but occasionally there are gems.

On YouTube the Barrow Neurological Institute has posted a Cochlear Implant Patient Q&A that features three patients being interviewed about their experiences. I watched this twice, once with my wife. It was invaluable and complemented what I was already learning by asking questions I had not considered.

<https://youtu.be/9NBLWGL6k3I?feature=shared>

Also on Youtube is John Ross's brilliant series, My Cochlear Journey, which is informative and very comprehensive covering the process of making the decision to get an implant, what to expect from the surgery and learning how to live with an implant.

My Cochlear Journey

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLe2ZZCecyf-1PQCG3C5O1v6Nmu2rH1XC0s>

## **7. Expect the unexpected and enjoy brain plasticity**

For the first few months I didn't enjoy a lot of what I was hearing. For a week or so after surgery my tinnitus resembled a roar. Some nights I thought I could hear a conversation between people who were not there. For several months every step I took inside produced a sound like wind blowing into the microphone of my CI.

Some sounds seemed to come from different places. For example, before my implant I sometimes had difficulty hearing the car's turn indicator. After being implanted I could simultaneously hear two clicks - a low frequency click coming from the

dashboard and a high frequency click seemed to be next to my implanted ear.

But over time the brain's capability to create new neural pathways, and indeed learning to hear through electrodes is amazing. The issues described above have been resolved.

The most pleasing and unexpected outcome of the surgery was having no pain and only a little discomfort. This may not be true for everyone.

Losing my residual hearing was the most negative outcome. When I remove my cochlear processor and hearing aid I am effectively deaf and unable to hear the fire alarm in our apartment complex or my wife talking to me from centimetres away.

## **8. Use exercises - but don't get stuck**

I used a range of free and paid APPS to complete daily exercises for many months. I am bi-modal but the exercises were completed using only my CI ear.

Generally I made progress even though the voices I heard always sounded robotic. Then I reached a point when I got stuck on exercises comparing word pairs with th/f and m/n sounds.

Over a month I was scoring less than 50% on tests for these consonant pairs, as my decisions were always guesswork. When I repeated the exercises b-modally my score jumped to between 82% and 100%.

I had no difficulty with audiobooks streaming only to my CI, due no doubt to being able to hear words in context, so I decided to live in my bimodal world and move on from dealing with troublesome words in isolation.

## **9. Keep a journal**

From the beginning on this journey I kept a journal. Its early entries are questions for the surgeon, audiologist, and CI companies. Then I used it for questions to mentors and implantees.

After implantation I recorded experiences and progress on the hearing exercises to assist the audiologist with mappings.

## **10. Trust your gut**

I was 70 and dealing with daily hearing frustrations when I started this journey. I could make no further progress with hearing aids and I satisfied the criteria for receiving an implant.

However my ENT surgeon told me that I might receive greater benefit if I waited a few more years but that I should trust my gut to make this decision.

So I decided to proceed as I would prefer to put my energy into learning to live with a CI rather than putting up with the daily frustrations and waiting for another time to address the issue of hearing loss.

The good news is that if you trust your gut, whatever decision you make, you will work to ensure that it is the right decision.

# LET'S GET PRACTICAL ABOUT REHABILITATION

By Rebecca Claridge



For some time, I have been thinking about creating a practical rehabilitation workshop, so it was with great excitement that I shared this concept with Sunshine Coast CICADA participants on 18th of March.

My vision of a small group of CI recipients and their communication partners strategically scattered across a spacious meeting room didn't quite pan out as the seats filled past capacity. My concern rose thinking about the background noise likely to create havoc with the planned listening activities and this swiftly became a reality. Nevertheless, it was exciting to have so many CI recipients, and their friends and family sharing a genuine interest in rehabilitation and working together to facilitate the best outcome from hearing technologies.

Let me summarise what we talked about and practiced in this "Rehabilitation. Let's Get Practical" Session.

## **Know your hearing technology and what helps.**

Learn and use the correct labels for all the parts of your CI system, share this with others and describe what helps you hear better in conversations. Here are some of the suggestions volunteered by the group;

- I am interested in hearing you. Can I ask you to repeat that when X has finished speaking. (this is such a polite way of giving a suggestion that will minimise people talking at the same time!)
- Can I ask you to repeat what you just said, exactly as you said it. (you also might like to share what

you did hear so the speaker can emphasis the pieces you missed)

- I am just going to move around so my good ear is in a better position to hear you. (You can also move around to re-position the speakers face into the light to help with lip-reading)
- Could you slow down your speech just a little please.

## **You can try using humour to diffuse any tension;**

- I can only listen at 100 mph and you are talking 300 mph, could I ask you to slow down please.
- Can I ask you to face me while you are speaking so I can hear you and see your beautiful face. It helps with lip-reading.

## **On the phone:**

- I am hearing impaired. Can I ask you to speak slowly and clearly please.
- Can you try bringing your microphone close to your mouth. This might cut some of the background noise that is making it difficult for me to hear you.

## **Evaluate your current level of listening function and set rehab goals**

All of us need help on occasion to set fresh goals in life and listening rehabilitation is no different. Periodically complete a self-assessment of how you are functioning with your listening skills and identify goals you can focus on over the next few months.

Discuss your goals with your audiologist and ask your family and friends for help in reaching them. Watch the MED-EL Rehab at Home for Adults video series filmed on the Sunshine Coast to discover how four local CI recipients work their way, using everyday activities, through 12 listening goals. Rehab at Home for Adults: Mastering Everyday Listening Goals - The MED-EL Blog.

### Complete the Ling Sound Test

Make a habit of completing the Ling sound test, once a week or so, to ensure your technology is always working its best. Ask a companion to say the sounds for you to repeat or listen via MED-EL's ReDi app. If you have difficulties with any of the sounds, or notice any changes try the following;

- Ask the speaker to come closer
- Check your processor (perform a system check using HearCare or equivalent app if available)
- Document your results and discuss with your audiologist

### Find time for Auditory Training

Listening improvements with your cochlear implant come from a combination of programming (mapping) improvements, adequate Audio Processor wear time (minimum of 10 hours per day) and listening practice. Listening practice can take many forms, from passively listening to TV with the captions on, to structured active listening exercises where you concentrate on understanding every word. There are a wide range of freely available resources you can utilise to support active listening practice. Ask your audiologist for suggestions that could be right for you. Try and find a mix of analytic and synthetic listening exercises. Analytic exercises are designed to provide practice listening to specific sounds in words or contrasting sounds in word pairs, for example; listen to the difference between 'sell' and 'shell'. Synthetic listening exercises use more diverse vocabulary in meaningful language contexts, for example; listening to sentences that describe appointment dates and times.

We completed both analytic and synthetic exercises in the Rehab Let's Get Practical workshop.

The analytic exercise provided practice listening to the difference between the sounds 'oo' and 'm' in pairs of words.

### Sample Analytic Listening Activity

#### Instructions

##### 1. Read aloud

Speaker slowly reads aloud the word pairs (listener reads along).

Listener reads aloud the same words.

##### 2. Listen and repeat

Speaker says one of the words.

Listener repeats the word.

	'oo' words	'm' words	result
Word pairs ➡	boo	boom	
	who	whom	
	two	tomb	
	zoo	zoom	

The synthetic listening exercise card offered four different activities increasing in complexity. We discussed how to modify the difficulty of synthetic listening activities to provide practice at the optimal level where the listener is successfully identifying 85 -90 % of words correctly. For example; reduce the number of words in the set to simplify the listening or add on to a sentence to increase the challenge.

### Sample Synthetic Listening Activity

#### Instructions

1. Read along and listen while your communication partner reads the words in each column.
2. Your communication partner will then say a sentence using one word from each column. Repeat what you hear.

Max	wants	two	shirts
Joanne	found	three	dollars
Barnaby	discovered	seven	movie tickets
Elizabeth	returned	fifteen	library books

For more synthetic listening activities with easy-to-follow instructions access the Adult Rehabilitation Kits on Home - The MED-EL Blog. For independent synthetic and analytic listening practice download the MED-EL ReDi app. These resources are freely available and suitable for use by all hearing technology users. Happy listening.

Questions? Feel free to reach out; Rebecca.Claridge@medel.com







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- ✓ Superior hearing performance



Find out more at  
[go.medel.com/S3](https://go.medel.com/S3)

## The Future of Cochlear Implants: Promising Feasibility Study

A significant advancement in hearing loss treatment has been achieved with the publication of a feasibility study on the Totally Implantable Cochlear Implant (TICI) by leading hearing implant manufacturer MED-EL. The results showed that the TICI offers hearing performance comparable to conventional cochlear implants while providing unprecedented convenience and discretion by eliminating the need for external components.

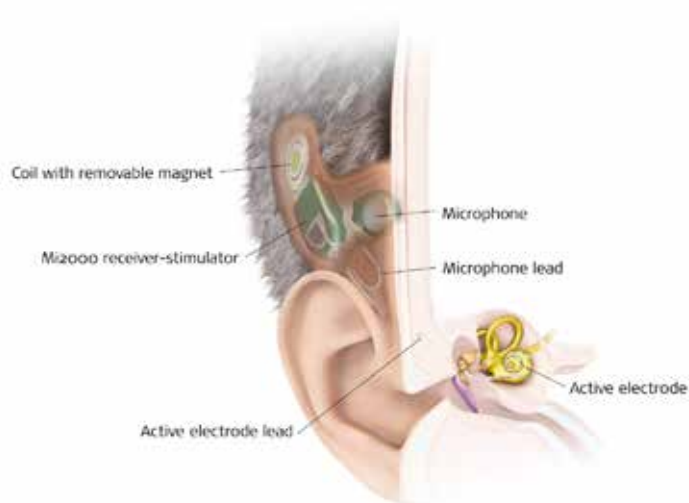
### A New Era In Hearing Healthcare

The study, published in Communications Medicine and led by Prof. Dr. Philippe Lefèbvre and Prof. Dr. Joachim Müller, evaluated the safety and performance of the TICI in six participants with severe-to-profound hearing loss.

The TICI integrates the audio processor, microphone, and battery into one device fitted under the skin, allowing continuous hearing during daily activities, including sleep and bathing, without reliance on external parts.

#### Key results from the study include:

- Safety: The TICI demonstrated a strong safety profile.
- Hearing Performance: Speech perception tests confirmed outcomes comparable to traditional cochlear implants.
- Quality of Life: Patient-reported outcomes showed improved comfort, satisfaction, and overall quality of life.



Schematic of the implanted TICI showing positioning of the implant and microphone within the temporal bone. The different components of the TICI are shown in relation to the anatomic structures of the skull and inner ear.

### Pioneering Innovation in Action

In 2020, the first-ever European surgeries to implant a TICI were performed by Prof. Dr. Lefèbvre and Prof. Dr. Müller, marking a pivotal milestone in cochlear implant history. This breakthrough was made possible by MED-EL's engineering excellence and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The TICI system features advancements in implantable microphone technology, extended battery life, and biocompatible materials, ensuring durability and long-term usability.

Dr. Ingeborg Hochmair, co-founder and CEO of MED-EL, stated, *"Our cochlear implants have transformed the lives of hundreds of thousands globally. The TICI fulfills the vision of an invisible, effortless device, thanks to over a decade of dedication from our expert team."*

### Looking Ahead

While the feasibility study provides preliminary evidence, the TICI's success paves the way for future research and development. Dr. Hochmair affirmed, *"Totally implantable cochlear implants are the future of hearing technology, representing a profound leap forward in usability, aesthetics, and user satisfaction."*

The TICI remains under research and is not available for commercial use at this time. The open-access study can be accessed online.

For updates on the TICI and other MED-EL innovations, please visit the MED-EL website or email [hearinghelp@medel.com.au](mailto:hearinghelp@medel.com.au)

# ROSE'S STORY



I had hearing loss from my early teens and consistently wore two conventional hearing aids. I was lucky that as my hearing deteriorated, the hearing technology improved and mostly I managed with the two aids. In Feb 2022 I had a virus and lost all the hearing in my left ear. It was now very difficult to hear socially even one on one. I decided to investigate a cochlear implant (CI). I have a good friend who is an audiologist, another who is a GP and also an audiologist at Attune. All three could see how hard it was for me now and were very keen to look at the possibility of a CI. I have private health insurance so started the process, having all my pre-CI appointments at the Sunshine Coast. I found that OK, however, I did not “click” with the audiologist and in hindsight should have changed to another one. A good friend and I caught the tilt train from Bundaberg to most appointments. It made more of a day out being able to have a drink etc. All the pre-surgery appointments were fine. I was surprised how tired I got but really, I was OK.

The surgery was very easy and I had mild vertigo for a day or two but was able to come back on the train. This was late June 2023.

When it was turned on over the two days, that was OK. Two weeks after turn on, I went back to the Sunshine Coast for mapping. My friend couldn't come so I just went by myself on the train. I felt overwhelmed at the appointment but was OK. On the

train on the way home I started to feel sick, hot and bothered. The lady conductor was very kind but as I was definitely unwell and we were close to Maryborough, they called the ambulance and I was put off the train. I was taken to Maryborough Hospital and had some tests but the staff there realised very quickly it was a panic attack. They were very kind, especially when they realised that I had been a radiographer for many years. They put me in their tea room until someone arrived to take me back to Bundaberg.

There followed a very difficult

right wrist and the fingers on my left hand were dislocated. My left knee was very badly damaged as well. Those three months were not as difficult to live through as the first three months post CI surgery.

I found rehab fun. I live alone and am a fitness instructor so at the end of my classes someone would very kindly stay back to do 30 mins rehab with me. Although I could not really distinguish the different voices, I was aware that they were all different. I think I was lucky to have so many different voices.

I would still do it all again, as now (18 months later) it is just like a miracle. For the first time I can remember, I feel I hear normally.

time. When I got back home, I was determined to keep the CI on all day and do my rehab. That first week after mapping was really loud and hard, culminating in my crashing the car by backing into someone. I had just passed the drivers' test for over 75 year olds. LOL. No real damage but it did make me think how hard I was finding everything - just too much input. I decided in the car park to turn off the CI while I was driving.

I had bouts of vertigo and had to learn how to cope with that, but I have never had another panic attack. Back in 2020 my husband, Roy, had died and seven weeks later I was knocked off my pushbike. I had a broken

I would still do it all again, as now (18 months later) it is just like a miracle. For the first time I can remember, I feel I hear normally. What would have made it easier is less travel and getting on better with the audiologist. If I was to have another one, I would be much better prepared to cope with those first few months.

*CICADA Queensland would like to thank Bundaberg member Rose Fraser for sharing her story.*





# HEARING IMPLANTS EXPLAINED

You might have noticed a few changes lately in the way we talk about hearing technology here at CICADA Queensland. Terms like cochlear implants and hearing implants are coming up more often. But what do they actually mean? And what's the difference?

While traditional hearing aids amplify sound to make it louder, they don't work for everyone. That's where hearing implants come in. These small medical devices are designed to bypass the damaged parts of the ear and send sound signals straight to the brain, helping people connect with the world around them in a whole new way.

## TYPES OF HEARING IMPLANTS

Hearing loss looks different for everyone, and thankfully, so do the solutions. There are several types of hearing implants, each designed for a specific kind of hearing challenge:

### Cochlear Implants

These are probably the most well-known type of hearing implant. They're used by people with severe to profound hearing loss who don't get much benefit from hearing aids. A cochlear implant has two parts: an external processor worn behind the ear and an internal device that's surgically placed under the skin. Instead of making sounds louder, it turns them into electrical signals that stimulate the hearing nerve, making it easier to understand speech and sounds.

### Bone Conduction Implants

Ideal for people with issues in the outer or middle ear, bone conduction implants send sound through the bones of the skull instead of through the ear canal. A common example is the BAHAs (Bone-Anchored Hearing Aids), often used by people with chronic ear infections or conditions like microtia, where the outer ear hasn't fully developed.

### Auditory Brainstem Implants

These are a more specialised option for people who don't have a functioning hearing nerve, such as those with a condition like neurofibromatosis type 2. Instead of stimulating the inner ear, these implants send sound signals directly to the brainstem.

### Middle Ear Implants

For people who can't use traditional hearing aids but don't quite need a cochlear implant, middle ear implants offer another option. These small devices are attached to the bones of the middle ear and amplify sound vibrations, helping make hearing clearer without blocking the ear canal.

Hearing implants don't bring back hearing exactly the way it was, but they can open the door to a whole new world of sound. If you or someone close to you is finding it hard to hear, it might be time to speak with a hearing specialist about implant options. With today's technology, hearing is more accessible than ever and there's no harm in exploring what's possible.



# DEALING WITH NOISY SITUATIONS

By Rick Thornton

Workshops, family parties, food halls, wind, restaurants, etc. How often do we deny ourselves the pleasure of other's company because we have difficulty hearing, communicating or participating in the event? LOTS of times! This can result in increasing social isolation created by your own reticence and others perceptions of you as "standoffish", "antisocial" or "too hard". True enough but what can we do about it? There are a few things that can be considered.

**Forgive.** Hearing loss is a condition not a crime. Don't feel any stigma or somehow "less" than others. It is a fact of life. Accept it and forgive yourself. Other people don't see. Some don't think or are impatient with others (we all know people like that). Most just have no knowledge of hearing loss. You just don't hear all that well. There are options you can use to ease that.

**Learn.** If you have hearing aids, BAHA or cochlear implants learn to use them. What features are there in your devices that you can control? What features are available? Read the instruction manuals for the devices, use Youtube, insist that your Audi informs you what features are available, what you have and what you don't and why. Importantly, experiment with them to learn how to use them effectively. Research ways to interact with others, by choosing where you sit, tell them what would help you, etc. Are there any assistive

listening devices you can use?

**Avoid.** There are places where there is little you can do! You can simply avoid these situations. Be careful with this as it can lead to social isolation. In most social situations there is something you can do for yourself or accommodations you can ask for.

**Alternatives.** Been invited to lunch at a particular restaurant that is awful hearing wise? I have some here that are simply large boxes of hard surfaces with no rugs or wall hangings and sound like being in a factory. Suggest an alternative (and why) to who invited you. The website Ambient Menu (<https://theambientmenu.com.au/>) is a way to view restaurants by noise rating as well as other factors. Ask to meet outside perhaps. You could even take control and invite them to your choice of place! There may always be an alternative.

**Accept.** Sometimes there is no alternative. Accept that it will be difficult. Go anyway. Do your best or turn the aids off and just enjoy the presence and fun of the others. Tell them you are "off air", smile and do your best. If it gets too bad there is always the door to outside (graciously done of course).

**Control.** Want company? Know local venues are difficult for you? Take control. Invite them to your place, a picnic in a park or a quiet place where you know you can cope. Pick your battleground. Get the venue to arrange seating

where it suits YOU best and sit in the seat that suits YOU best. For me that is outside or in a corner with my back to the main noise area.

**Choose.** There are those who simply don't care, are self absorbed, impatient and maybe even offensive about your situation. The answer here is to walk away or ignore them. They are not worth your time. Dr Seuss—those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.

**Advocate for yourself!** Be upfront and tell it like it is. Hi, my name is Rick, I have hearing loss and need you to face me, speak clearly, etc. Ask the host if they would maybe consider a different venue and why. Above all, don't accept "dismissal" by the intolerant, or hurtful "jokes". Approach that person circumspectly and make your hurt or displeasure known. I will not accept "never mind" "doesn't matter" or "tell you later". I deal with that on the spot by informing that person that I DO mind, it DOES matter and there may not be a later (politely and not publicly).

You have as much right as anyone else to live life and enjoy it. You have a difficulty, but there are ways to deal with it in some way. I have three watchwords (the three Ps) for cochlear implants being "Patience, practice and persistence." For social situations it changes to "Patience, PLANNING and persistence". Works fairly well for me. Give it a try.

# MAKE THAT CALL

By Robert Webber

There is a happy ending to this story but it took an innovative product to achieve it. Queen Elizabeth II used an elegant Latin phrase to describe a very bad year. My way of describing my mother's disastrous 2024 is much pithier.

My father, her husband and constant companion of 73 years, died in April. Two months later her elderly and beloved cat had to be euthanised. Being very alone and profoundly deaf, my mother chose an old shelter cat to keep her company - it ran away within four hours\*.

As a family we were at a loss. My mother is in Melbourne; I am in Brisbane. She could not even recognise my voice if I called her on the landline, let alone understand what I was saying. Many dollars over several years were wasted

buying mobile phones in a futile attempt to find one she could use. She could only understand someone if she could see them. This meant that family members living in Melbourne would have to drive over to see her for even trivial matters.

Essentially it was pointless calling Mum and contact from family and friends dwindled.

There is no doubt that being elderly, alone and unable to communicate compounded my mother's grief and we struggled to find a solution.

I dreaded introducing my 97 year old mother to new technology but I am delighted to report that we have had great success with the Konnekt Captioning Videophone.

The Konnekt is remarkably clever but it's the exceptional

support that ensures the success of the device. It came with all the numbers she might wish to call and the technical support setting up and maintaining the device has been outstanding.

My mother can now make and receive calls with family and friends across Australia and overseas. She can not only see them during the call but the captioning of each call, as well as an additional sound-bar, ensure she is able to communicate effectively.

Friends, who had stopped calling her, now ring to tell her when they are coming over.

*\*Another happy ending - the cat was found six months later but my mother has decided he is not the right pet for her.*

## Looking for **HELP?**

Stay **Safe** and **Connected** with  
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<https://konnekt.com.au/cap>  
or call us at 1300 851 823

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- Auto-corrected captions, never miss a word
- Direct video and phone calls, ensure your privacy
- Personalised solutions, with lifetime support
- Government funding available for eligible participants



# HEARING IN BACKGROUND NOISE - HOW CAN COCHLEAR IMPLANTS HELP?



MARTIN MILLS • EDUCATION AND TRAINING MANAGER AT ADVANCED BIONICS

Difficulty hearing in noise is a common issue, especially when listening to someone speaking. Noise can consist of many sounds at once, and our ears and brain have to work hard to pick out what is important. For those with hearing loss, trying to understand speech in noise is often even harder.

## Why hearing in noise is harder for people with hearing loss

People with hearing loss will find hearing some sounds difficult, including speech. Background noise can mask the speech sounds that they are trying to hear. As a result, the brain may have to fill in parts of words or sentences that are missing. This may cause the person to hear or respond incorrectly.

## How cochlear implants help with hearing in noise

Cochlear implants help people hear by sending signals to the hearing nerve. By directly stimulating the auditory nerve, the cochlear implant bypasses damaged portions of the ear that may not be working effectively. Hearing a clearer sound means the brain can use less energy to hear and understand.

Cochlear implants use a number of features to help people hear better in noise.

### Signal processing

The cochlear implant includes a sound processor worn on the outside of the ear that has microphones that pick-up sound. The processor splits the sound into different parts using filters. Filters help by focusing on useful sounds, such as speech. They can also determine which are less useful, for example, the hum of a fan.

The sound processor can also reduce loud sounds using compression. Compression helps make sure the sound is comfortable in even the loudest places.

### Directional microphones

The sound processor may also have microphones on the front and back to catch additional sounds in the environment. Directional microphones are designed to catch sounds that come from a particular direction (usually the front) while sounds from other directions are reduced. This can help the listener hear someone talking from that direction. If noise levels increase the microphone range can narrow. This helps further reduce noise and allow the listener to focus more on the person talking.

### Automatic sound adjustments or steering

Newer sound processors can automatically adjust to surroundings. Features like AutoSense OS™ is an example.

AutoSense OS uses microphones to detect the amount of sound, including noise. If the amount of sound is low, it will not attempt to reduce noise. If the amount of sound is high, it will attempt to reduce unwanted noise

levels. The technology will automatically switch on directional microphones or use filters and compression.

### Wireless connectivity

Modern sound processors such as AB's Marvel CI can connect to phones, TVs and other devices using Bluetooth. The sound is streamed wirelessly and directly to the cochlear implant, bypassing other sounds and noises around the listener.

### What else can help with listening in noise?

We hear best with two ears. In fact, when hearing with both ears, our brain is better able to pick out the sounds we want to hear in noisy places. That's why when there's hearing loss in both ears, it's best to get hearing devices that support better hearing from both sides. Depending on the hearing loss, this could be two cochlear implants, or a cochlear implant plus another device, such as a hearing aid or CROS.

### Auditory training

Auditory training is important when getting used to a cochlear implant. This includes activities such as listening and repeating sounds or words. This is often done in quiet environments, as well as places with noise. It may also include lip-reading tasks, so being able to see the person speaking will be helpful in noise. Practicing listening with a cochlear implant in different places is important for the brain to get used to different types of sounds. Auditory training is key to helping the brain hear a clearer sound.

### What to do if you have trouble hearing in noise

Difficulties hearing in noise are common, but technology, features, assistive listening devices and auditory training can be key to success. Hearing better in noise means people can start enjoying places or activities they may have avoided, including meeting with friends or family in noisier places.

Please discuss your options with a hearing healthcare provider. They can advise you on what might be beneficial for your hearing needs. They may refer you to be assessed for a cochlear implant if appropriate.

Scan the QR code to explore AB's blog for expert insights, personal journeys, and valuable information on hearing loss and cochlear implants, or visit:  
[advancedbionics.com/blog](https://advancedbionics.com/blog)



# NAÍDA CI MARVEL DESIGNED WITH YOU IN MIND



For over 30 years, Advanced Bionics has been the cochlear implant innovation leader. In partnership with **Phonak**, one of the world's leading providers of hearing aid solutions, we present our most advanced system yet—**Naída™ CI Marvel**.

Naída CI Marvel is a part of an innovative, advanced cochlear implant system that delivers a brilliant hearing experience. This means powerful sound and excellent hearing in any environment, along with flexibility and durability that allows you to meet all of life's adventures head-on. It offers a wide variety of features designed to improve hearing across all listening situations using AutoSense OS™ 3.0 operating system and direct streaming from a multitude of devices. Every aspect of the system is designed to be seamlessly operated, providing you the ultimate ease of use. Designed for the moments that matter most, Naída CI Marvel offers:



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\*When used together with HiRes Ultra/Ultra 3D cochlear implant.

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NAÍDA CI MARVEL



ADVANCED  
BIONICS  
POWERFUL CONNECTIONS





# EAR TO THE GROUND...



Russ Ezzy

## MEET RUSS

CICADA Queensland welcomes Russ Ezzy to the Committee.

With a background spanning large remote cattle stations and suburban house construction, Russ brings a diverse range of business management skills to the committee. His extensive experience working with Aboriginal communities further enriches his contribution. Now enjoying retirement by the beach near Bundaberg, Russ is BiModal, implanted with MED-EL and uses the Sonnet 3 processor with the EAS (Electronic Acoustic Simulation) system on his right side, while wearing a conventional hearing aid on his left.

At CICADA Queensland, Russ will be focussing on policies, procedures and funding, and we welcome him to the committee!"



John Foreman

## TOWNSVILLE

CICADA Queensland member, Ed Errington, recently gave an informative presentation on Tinnitus to the Townsville group.

The Townsville Hearing Support group meet on the 3rd Thursday of the month from 10.30 to 12.00 in the Townsville RSL Boardroom.



## COORDINATOR SUPPORT

**YOUR COORDINATOR  
NEEDS YOUR HELP**

Can you spend a few hours each month assisting your local area coordinator?

Could you help host a MeetUp in your local area, assist your local coordinator with tasks, or stand in for them if needed?

If you would like to support your local CICADA Qld group by assisting your coordinator contact us for more information.

Contact us today to learn more about this exciting volunteer opportunity.

**ENQUIRE NOW**



[www.cicadaqld.org](http://www.cicadaqld.org)





# TECH TALK IN TOOWOOMBA

By Rob Frith

Darling Downs Area Coordinator Rob Frith recently held a MeetUp focusing on new advances in assistive technology...

Thanks to everyone who joined us for the Special Event on Monday, 31st March!

It was a well-attended session, and I believe many people walked away with something useful. That said, I did have some concerns that the concept of using technology to improve the hearing experience may not have been fully clear.

Here's a clearer explanation:

Many of us use hearing aids or Cochlear Implants (CIs), which rely on tiny microphones that pick up sound from the surrounding environment. Hearing aids amplify those sounds, while CIs convert them into electrical impulses sent to the hearing nerve.

But there's a challenge: the further we are from the sound source - whether it's a person, a TV, or something else - the harder it becomes to hear clearly. Distance introduces distortion and allows background noise to interfere.

To improve this, we use technology like mini microphones or devices such as the Roger ON. These can be placed close to the person speaking or even worn around their neck. These mics then wirelessly send the sound directly to our hearing devices. It's as if we've moved ourselves closer to the source, which dramatically improves clarity.

There are several ways this wireless connection can happen. Bluetooth is one of the newer and more familiar methods, but there are also older systems like telecoil and Wi-Fi-based transmission. While telecoil has been around for a long time, it can sometimes be unreliable or limited in its performance.

The latest and most exciting development is Auracast, which is an advanced form of Bluetooth. Unlike traditional Bluetooth (like the kind used in wireless earbuds), Auracast offers a broader range and is initially designed for use in public settings - airports, theatres, train stations, and more. It allows direct streaming of sound to hearing devices, bypassing conventional speaker systems that often muffle or distort speech. However companies like Samsung, JBL, Sennheiser and many others are all releasing home domestic products like TV's that

stream Auracast for everyone later this year, with some available already.

Auracast is expected to eventually replace telecoil technology in many places, offering a much more effective way of delivering clear audio. While it's still being rolled out, it's a big step toward the "holy grail" of hearing tech: minimising our reliance on hearing sound that travels through the air. Instead, we'll be able to connect directly to the source - whether that's a microphone in a public venue or the audio output of a TV.

Of course, these technologies are intended to complement, not replace, our everyday use of hearing aids. In casual situations, like chatting with someone at the shops, it wouldn't be practical (silly even!) to ask someone to wear a mini mic. But when it's convenient, these tools can really enhance the experience.

I hope that explanation clears things up. The key takeaway is: we need to become familiar with the devices available, how they connect to our hearing aids, and how they can be used to suit different environments. It's not always simple, and it can be a bit of a learning curve. Let's stay patient with Auracast - it's still in the early stages, but it holds a lot of promise. As new devices become available, we'll continue to explore what works best for us as individuals.

One final note about TV streaming and missed conversations...

You're not alone in experiencing the problem where you're connected to the TV and can't hear someone talking to you. It's the same for anyone using earbuds or headphones. Some people get around it by only connecting one hearing processor to the TV and leaving the other ear open to the room. I've tried this myself, but I find it distracting.

Personally, I often just turn on captions and read while watching TV with others, rather than streaming the sound. This way, I can still follow along and respond to conversation when needed. It's also great practice in matching what you hear with text, which can help train your brain over time.

Thanks again for coming along and for all your great questions!

## | Rediscovering the joy of music and television

When familiar songs lose their spark, or voices on the television start sounding muffled, it can feel like something deeply personal has gone missing. For many people living with hearing loss, or adjusting to life with cochlear implants, music and entertainment become harder to enjoy, and easier to give up.

But these moments of joy are worth reclaiming.

Hearing music and speech clearly relies on more than just turning up the volume. It's about the quality of sound, the balance of frequencies, and how your unique hearing profile interprets them. That's why, even with the support of cochlear implants or hearing aids, some people still find certain listening situations—like following fast-paced dialogue or enjoying music—to be more challenging. This is often due to the complexity of sound processing or the way background noise and competing signals affect clarity.

The good news is that technology is evolving to help bridge that gap. Personalised audio solutions are now more accessible than ever, making it easier to tailor sound to the way you hear. Audeara is an Australian company focused solely on personalised audio, developed in collaboration with hearing health professionals to support people across the hearing spectrum.

They're designed to personalise sound to your unique hearing profile, using a simple hearing check within the Audeara app. This can be done while wearing your hearing aids or after removing them—and the headphones are also compatible with cochlear implants. The result is clearer music, more balanced speech, and a more enjoyable listening experience in everyday life.

"I rate the Audeara A-02s to be the best over-ear headphones with all of the features and incredible sound! The ability to have a hearing test to tailor it to my hearing with my aids is a plus."

– Joe, Audeara customer

For those who find television especially frustrating, pairing headphones with a TV streamer can make a world of difference. With the A-02 TV Bundle, for example, sound is transmitted directly to the headphones, reducing background noise and improving clarity—without affecting anyone else in the room.

"They are comfortable, respond to the TV transmitter effortlessly and the customised tuning is easy to carry out and effective. These are the second generation of Audeara headsets I've owned, and I'm pleasantly satisfied with this product."

– Bruce, Audeara customer

Whether you're new to cochlear implants, have worn hearing aids for years, or are simply seeking a better way to connect with sound, exploring personalised audio could help you rediscover the soundtrack of your life—and share it with the people who matter most.



# Wish it sounded like it used to?

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## WHO WE ARE

CICADA Qld Inc. is an independent, not-for-profit organisation run by volunteers, supporting people with hearing loss and hearing implants for over 30 years.

## VISION STATEMENT

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

## MISSION STATEMENT

To work collaboratively with hearing professionals and the industry to promote and provide awareness, rehabilitation support, and opportunities for social engagement in a community encompassing all people with hearing loss, current hearing implant users, those considering hearing implants, and their friends and families.



**Would you like to host a CICADA Qld 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,

hearing 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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Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the information in the CICADA Chorus is accurate, it's intended as a general guide only and should not replace personalised advice from your hearing health professional.

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