



Wired for sound

Proving disability is no barrier; one QPS staff member has a new hearing device and could not be happier.

Annette Gilmore, administrative officer with Offender Management, recently chose to have a cochlear implant - a surgically implanted electronic device that works by directly stimulating any functioning auditory nerves inside the cochlea with electronic impulses - and has since been busy adjusting to an increased variety of sounds.

Annette was diagnosed with severe sensory-neural hearing loss at 18 months of age. To communicate she relied heavily on visual cues and despite her incredible lipreading ability Annette still found it challenging to communicate effectively in groups or in situations with a lot of background noise.

When Annette's audiologist gave her the thumbs up to have a cochlear implant she said she was petrified and elated at the same time and proud that she had finally decided to take the plunge.

"Two weeks later I was switched on. I can't describe how excited and nervous I was," Annette said.

"When my audiologist first turned on the implant I heard a tiny soft 'bing' and I smiled and burst into tears. I found it amazing that if I listened very hard I could hear all the soft sounds.

"I listened to my family's voices for the first time, and although I couldn't understand what they were saying it was beautiful because I could hear them," Annette said.

Annette is still working through the gradual process of adjusting to the device and said one challenge is to

have conversations without lipreading.

"This is probably the most challenging because everyone speaks differently with different accents, pronunciations, tone and volume - I have to keep practising!"

Disability Action Week (July 15–21) has a new theme this year 'See beyond the disability – focus on our abilities'.

The aim of the week is to encourage positive attitudes towards people with a disability, improve access and make our community a better place for everyone.

The Service values diversity and strives for an equitable working environment with initiatives such as the People with Disabilities Support Network (PWD).

The PWD Support Network offers support for members with a disability, provides information and advice on disability matters and assists in the development and application of policies.

For more information on Disability Action Week or the People with Disabilities Support Network (PWD) contact the coordinator in your region or Lynn Rowsell, Senior Personnel Officer, Equity and Diversity Unit on 3364 3097.

In other news, the QPS Disability Service Plan comes into effect from July 1. The plan provides for the development and improvement of services both to clients and members with a disability, as well as their families and carers. Further information is available on the Bulletin Board.

*By Xanthe Dines,
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Disability Action Week

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Photo by Kevin Darch, Photographics Seaton

Distinguishing sounds over the phone is proving a big challenge for Annette Gilmore.