



Cochlear™ Awareness Network

# Karen's Story

Karen Dempsey  
Hears with a Cochlear Implant

Don't live in silence -  
rediscover the joy of sounds.



Hear now. And always

**Cochlear™**



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## Meet Karen

### Karen Dempsey

Currently hearing with a cochlear Implant  
Implant October 1998



Hi. I'm Karen Dempsey from Newcastle, Australia. I would like to share the story of my life with a hearing loss and how I regained it with a Nucleus® Freedom™ Cochlear Implant.

I was born in Broken Hill NSW with normal hearing. When I was in my teenage years I caught a virus which made me very sick for several weeks. It is thought that either this or the medication given to treat it caused my hearing loss.

However, it wasn't noticeable to me at this time. In my second year in High School one of my teacher's picked up I might have my hearing loss because I had taken a dictation test for an examination. Although I had spelt all words correctly I had written wrong words. A hearing check was performed in Adelaide and we discovered I did have a hearing loss, but I was told not to worry too much about it as I probably wouldn't need a hearing aid until I was around 40 years old. That suited me fine as no teenager wants to wear a hearing aid.

I progressed through school pretty well, achieved good marks in examinations and obtained my first job at a large department store in Broken Hill and advanced through the office from receptionist to Secretary for the Credit Manager. After several years I went to work for the Justice Department at the Broken Hill Court House, an absolute dream job and I loved every minute of it. I met my husband



through work and after our wedding we transferred to Newcastle where we have lived ever since.

## No-one was prepared to employ me with a hearing loss.

Following the birth of my children my hearing deteriorated more and more - my world was becoming quieter. After my son started school I tried to find a job but it was practically impossible as no-one was prepared to employ me with a hearing loss. Just about every job I applied for, regardless of whether I had the qualifications or not, because I had trouble with the telephone meant no job offer.

It was time for help! At Better Hearing Australia they welcomed me with open arms. I took on voluntary work and loved meeting people who had a hearing loss just like me. I no longer felt isolated. Although I should probably have been wearing a hearing aid already, I got my first aid just a few years shy of my 40th birthday. The doctor's predication about not having to wear aids until I was 40 had come true.

After several years it became obvious to me that hearing aids were not really helping anymore. I had met several people with a cochlear implant and began to explore whether an implant would work for me. At first my ENT specialist did not think I would be suitable, however he sent me to Professor Gibson of the Sydney Cochlear Implant Clinic in Sydney.

## I was both excited and a bit scared

I went through the testing and assessment procedure and when I was told I was a suitable candidate for an implant I was both excited and a bit scared. My surgery was on 28th September, 1998 at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney and my processor was switched on 30th October, 1998.

It was pouring with rain the day my processor was switched. When I came out of the clinic I heard the rain hitting my umbrella for the first time in 30 years and



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walking down to the road to catch the bus to the hotel, I could not believe how noisy the world had become.

I named my implant ET for all the alien sounds I was hearing.

At first I did not like my implant very much. So much noise made it difficult to come to terms with my new hearing. I had many emotional moments and it wasn't until a friend with an implant said to me 'It's like having a new member of the family who will change your life, so give it a name and learn to love it.' I named my implant ET for the alien sounds I was hearing and over time we got used to each other. Like soon grew into love and now I just couldn't imagine life without it.

The sound I love hearing the most is the tinkling of wind chimes, it is just a magical moment and I now have several scattered throughout my house.

Since my implant, my life has changed completely; it has opened up a whole new world. I have done many things I never thought possible, been to so many places I never thought I'd see, and met so many people - even a few celebrities. I have made wonderful lifelong friends and was absolutely thrilled to meet Professor Graeme Clark the inventor of the Cochlear Implant, a few years ago. I can use a telephone again, have done television and radio interviews and I'm even an actress. I am part of the Better Hearing Australia Shakespeare Company and we bring lots of laughs to people at the annual BHA conferences.

I now have the confidence to do many things and through my work with BHA I help to raise awareness of the assistance that is available for people with a hearing loss. I am an active advocate for equal access for people with a hearing loss especially in the field of television captioning, live theatre, movies and DVD's.

As a Cochlear Awareness Network volunteer I am happy to spread the word of just how wonderful the cochlear implant is and how it can really enrich lives.



## Connect with the Cochlear Family

Want to connect with other people who hear with Cochlear Implants or Bone Conduction implants? Here's how:

1. Read more stories on [www.cochlear.com](http://www.cochlear.com)
2. Visit the Cochlear Awareness Network website [www.c-a-network.com](http://www.c-a-network.com)
3. E-mail or call us to connect you with a Cochlear Awareness Network (CAN) Member who can share their personal story with you. CAN Members offer something unique – and that's experience. All CAN members are recipients of cochlear or bone conduction implants.

E-mail: [kaz\\_dempsey@hotmail.com](mailto:kaz_dempsey@hotmail.com)

Ph: 02 4950 2961

Mob: 0402 072 074

Be sure to tell us a little bit about yourself and your situation so we can match you with the most suitable CAN member.