

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 24 FEBRUARY 2011 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Compatibility of Technology

Question reference number: HS 35

Senator: Siewert

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Question:

Senator SIEWERT - I do not mean to harp on this but, no, that is not what they meant. They meant it was no longer compatible with their implant. I think it is very well known that your speech processors only last for a specific period. In fact, that is one of the issues that came up at the inquiry. The cost of replacing those can be prohibitive for some people. But that is a separate issue to whether the technology is actually compatible fully with the implant.

Ms Clapin - As far as I know it is, and we will take that on notice and confirm that for you.

Answer:

It is Australian Hearing's understanding that Cochlear implant manufacturers ensure that there is a compatible speech processor available for all generations of the client's implant. However, newly released speech processor technology is not immediately backwards-compatible with previous generations of implant.

When advances in technology occur as a result of a new implant system being available, the new processor requires modification before it can be used with earlier generations of implant. Backwards-compatibility is provided for the most recent generation of processor first, working back to earlier generations.

The last upgrade for the first model of implant was in 2008. Cochlear has not provided a date when the next upgrade will be available.