

Criteria for upgrade to Med El Sonnet speech processor

(July 2015)

Australian Hearing receives a fixed allocation to provide services to eligible cochlear implantees. The Cochlear Implant Support Program has two components:

1. Repairs and maintenance for all eligible clients who have a cochlear implant
 - a. Young Australians under 26 years of age
 - b. Australians aged 26 years and older who are eligible for the Office of Hearing Services Community Service Obligation program, the majority of whom are aged over 65 years.
2. Replacement and upgrade of speech processors for Young Australians under 26 years of age.

Funding Priority

The first priority of the cochlear implant support program is to ensure that clients who use a cochlear implant are kept “on-air” by:

- Providing repairs, replacement parts and batteries necessary to keep the speech processor working.
- Replacing speech processors that are lost or no longer able to be repaired (clients under 26 years only).

The second priority is to provide access to newer technology, when this technology provides improved perception of speech for the listener. New speech processor technology may also offer a range of features that may improve comfort, convenience or ease of use; however the focus of the upgrade program is on improving access to spoken language.

Criteria for Upgrade

The Sonnet speech processor has a directional microphone, which is not available in earlier generations of the Med El speech processors. Directional Microphones have been shown to increase speech understanding in noisy environments, for listeners of all ages.

Clients who have a working speech processor may apply for an upgrade to the Sonnet speech processor if the current speech processor is more than 3 years old and they:

- Are an eligible Australian Hearing client who has a valid Hearing Services Card.
- Consistently use their current speech processor.
- Have assessment results which show that they gain significant speech discrimination in quiet from their current speech processor. Suitable assessments include a speech discrimination test that is conducted using hearing alone at conversational levels, or the Parent Evaluation of Auditory-oral performance in Children (PEACH). These are conducted by the cochlear implant clinician.

Applications are submitted by the cochlear implant clinician.

This protocol will be reviewed in July 2016.