



CONGRATULATIONS TO DAVID KENT FOR NEW YEAR'S HONOURS RECOGNITION

The Southern Cochlear Implant Programme congratulates its chair David Kent MNZM for being honoured as a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the New Year Honours 2025 for his services to the Deaf and hard of hearing community.

Mr Kent is 75 and has been Deaf since his mid-20s. He lives in Kirwee, west of Christchurch. His life was transformed when hearing was restored to one ear after his first cochlear implant in 1998. He received a second implant in his other ear in 2011.

He is respected due to decades of volunteering advocacy work focused on equality and equity for the Deaf and hard of hearing community. Currently he is Chair of the *Southern Hearing Charitable Trust* (SHCT), which manages the Southern Cochlear Implant Programme (SCIP), and he has served on the board since 2003. He is a Board Member of the *National Foundation for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing*, having completed terms as Chair, Deputy Chair and Council Chair during his 12 years' service. Since 2017 he has been a Board Member of *ABLE – Making media accessible* and he had been a part of the Captioning Working Group prior to that appointment.

Mr Kent initially became involved with the SHCT when he himself became a recipient of cochlear implants. He recognised that the funding for this remarkable life-changing technology was extremely limited. He has made it his life's work to see that this inequity was overcome. Currently, 60 adults per year in SCIP's region are being implanted through Government funding.

"It is wonderful and unexpected, but this recognition is about the hearing sector and not my individual efforts," Mr Kent says.

"There are so many people in our community who have hearing difficulties – I urge them to seek help from an audiologist in case this amazing technology can re-introduce them to the hearing world," he says.

Mr Kent funded bilateral cochlear implants for himself without any contribution from the public cochlear implant programmes and has selflessly dedicated time and energy to the Deaf and hard of hearing community for many years.

His commitment to this sector can be measured by the following achievements:

- Campaigning for greater increase in captioning for free to air television and digital media.
- Involved in the development of a Public Health Programme aimed at driving systematic change in the hearing health sector, with a particular focus on early intervention, healthy aging and reducing inequities that exist for our Māori and Pacifica populations.
- Uniting the hearing sector nationally to collaborate to support the Public Health Programme and its shared vision.
- Providing regular input and advice on services and programmes to ensure they are fit for purpose.

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SOME FACTS ON COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

- A cochlear implant is a surgically-implanted electronic device that restores hearing for those with profound hearing loss.
- Each year the Southern Cochlear Implant Programme is funded by the Government to perform 60 adult operations and 23 paediatric operations for profoundly deaf people.
- Three referrals are received for every funded adult cochlear implant, and only 20 percent of patients are in a position to self-fund.
- Most people on the adult waiting list were not born deaf – they lost their hearing as adults. The onset of total and permanent deafness can happen to anyone at any point.
- Hearing aids become ineffective when the hearing loss is more than severe. Communication through spoken language becomes impossible. A cochlear implant is the last and only viable treatment that will restore hearing.

About the Southern Cochlear Implant Programme (SCIP):

- SCIP is one of only two cochlear implant providers in Aotearoa. It is a charity funded by Disability Support Services (DSS) within the Ministry of Social Development to provide public cochlear implant services to children and adults.
- SCIP has been providing cochlear implant services for more than 21 years and cares for patients south of Taupo by performing all cochlear implant assessments, arranging surgery, activating the cochlear implant, administering adjustments, and providing post-implant rehabilitation services.

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