

## COCHLEAR IMPLANT CONSUMER GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 August at Hearing House, Greenlane, Auckland

Present: Zeta, Vince, Lyn, Nic, Virginia, Stuart, Lee, Maxine, Donald, Donna, Rosie, Raewyn, Mark, Kerry, Jacqui, Karel, Laurie, John, Vivienne, Anita, Frank, Louis and Mona Ho and their son.

Donna opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, especially all the new people, among whom was Louis Ho, who is booked for an assessment and Jacqui, a hearing therapist from Auckland University.

Donna welcomed the speaker, Lance Cairns, former NZ cricketer.

Lance was raised in a normal household. At the age of fifteen, he left school and started work in the local freezing works where he worked for the next thirteen years. His job was stripping down carcasses and meant he was standing next to a high pressure hose which delivered a loud sshh sound all day. Without his realising it, the sound was slowly but surely robbing Lance of his hearing, so that by the age of seventeen he was already having problems with his hearing. He said there were lots of pointers to his deafness that he didn't recognise, but hindsight is a wonderful thing.

At the age of twenty five, Lance began his cricket career and became one of NZ's cricketing legends. The pointers to deafness were apparent at cricket team meetings when he had difficulty hearing what was being said. He had to rely on other team mates to fill him in on what had been said. On the field he couldn't hear the sound of the ball nicking the bat and frequently got it wrong. He said that, at the time, hearing wasn't a big issue with sports people, and especially cricket. So he got by for about eleven years, but life was about to change when at the age of thirty six or thirty seven, he retired from professional cricket and he had to find a job.

Because of his deafness, Lance ended up doing all kinds of work over the years and, by the time he was in his 40's, his hearing had completely gone, making employment almost impossible. Finally, he decided to go for a hearing test and bought a hearing aid. All it did was ramp up base sounds so it wasn't much help. He had enormous difficulty with the telephone and communication became a huge issue.

While Lance was having to deal with the deafness that was affecting his life, his wife became ill with breast cancer, and, after a five or six year battle with the disease, she died. It was a trying time for Lance with his inability to communicate effectively with his family and friends. However that was about to change. It wasn't until after he remarried that he heard about cochlear implants. Within two weeks of his assessment, Dr Phil Bird carried out the implant and life for Lance took a new turn. Suddenly, he was employable and able to earn a good income. For thirty to forty years he had missed out on earning a decent income as a result of his deafness. Lance was asked by the Cricket Council to take on the role of Talent scout. His brief is to identify outstanding talent. His finds then have the opportunity to go on to high performance cricket.

But the best thing of all was that at the age of 63, he was able to talk to his son on the telephone and be able to hold a meaningful conversation. He still worries about the inability to hear when the CI is turned off when he is asleep at night. Post CI he noticed a rattle in the car that he couldn't immediately identify. It turned out to be a bag of golf clubs in the boot.

Birds that he hadn't heard in half a lifetime were suddenly very loud. However, a ticking clock is not a problem, because he doesn't have one!

In reply to John's question, Lance said he used sign language to communicate on the cricket pitch. He said that a crowd of around eighty thousand people going nuts, makes hearing difficult for everyone.

Maxine wanted to know how Lance's life had changed apart from his being able to join the work force again. Lance said that before CI, he was reluctant to go out and he couldn't use the telephone. All that changed after CI. He could talk to his family on the telephone and regained his social life. He said the biggest thing was the clarity of hearing that had been missing for so long.

Donna talked about inclusiveness of community and the ability to take part in activities. She suggested that if you don't have control of a conversation, you may not know what is being said. Any change in subject matter can throw you.

Lance fielded numerous questions from members and also Lance talked about his granddaughter, Isabel, who was born completely deaf. She was successfully implanted with two.

Donna thanked Lance for his talk and presented him with a bottle of wine.