

Committee Secretary
Senate Community Affairs References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senators,

This submission is provided to assist the Senate Inquiry into Hearing Health in Australia. The Inquiry is wide ranging, however I would like to address the beneficial outcomes of providing extra or more efficient support to deaf and hearing impaired persons.

In a civilised world, accurate communication is essential but on meeting a sensory disabled person, we may assume "Did a deaf person get the message?" A more important concern, regarding communication, is whether the hearing participant of a conversation is aware that the content of the message was recognised by the hearing impaired/deaf person? Therefore aids and prostheses help the **non-disabled** members of our community, whether family, employers or casual acquaintances.

The acoustic measure of good communication is **speech recognition**. It is generally understood that no hearing prosthesis returns the same excellent speech recognition to a person who has lost some or all of their hearing. Cochlear implants and well-programmed digital hearing hearing-aids dramatically increase speech recognition performance to a fair-to-good listening level but not to the same level as someone who has normal hearing. A comparative graph, taken from the new Australian Standard AS1428.5 demonstrates the significance of speech recognition, when sensory disability is considered. But a small improvement can make a big difference!

Equally new developments in enhanced visual communication are appearing, such as live captioning and captioned telephones, to which the same benefits apply.

It is the outcome that is important and the outcome is better employability, better social interaction, better family relations. Hence cost of improving hearing health services should be measured as improved quality of life for many more people, than just one sensory disabled person.

These comments are in support of positive views that will be expressed to the Senate Committee by Deafness Forum Australia, Mrs Margaret Colebrook (Let Us Hear), the Submission by Ms Kate Locke and other submissions.

Sincerely,

Peter Kerley

Treasurer, Deafness Council of NSW Inc.

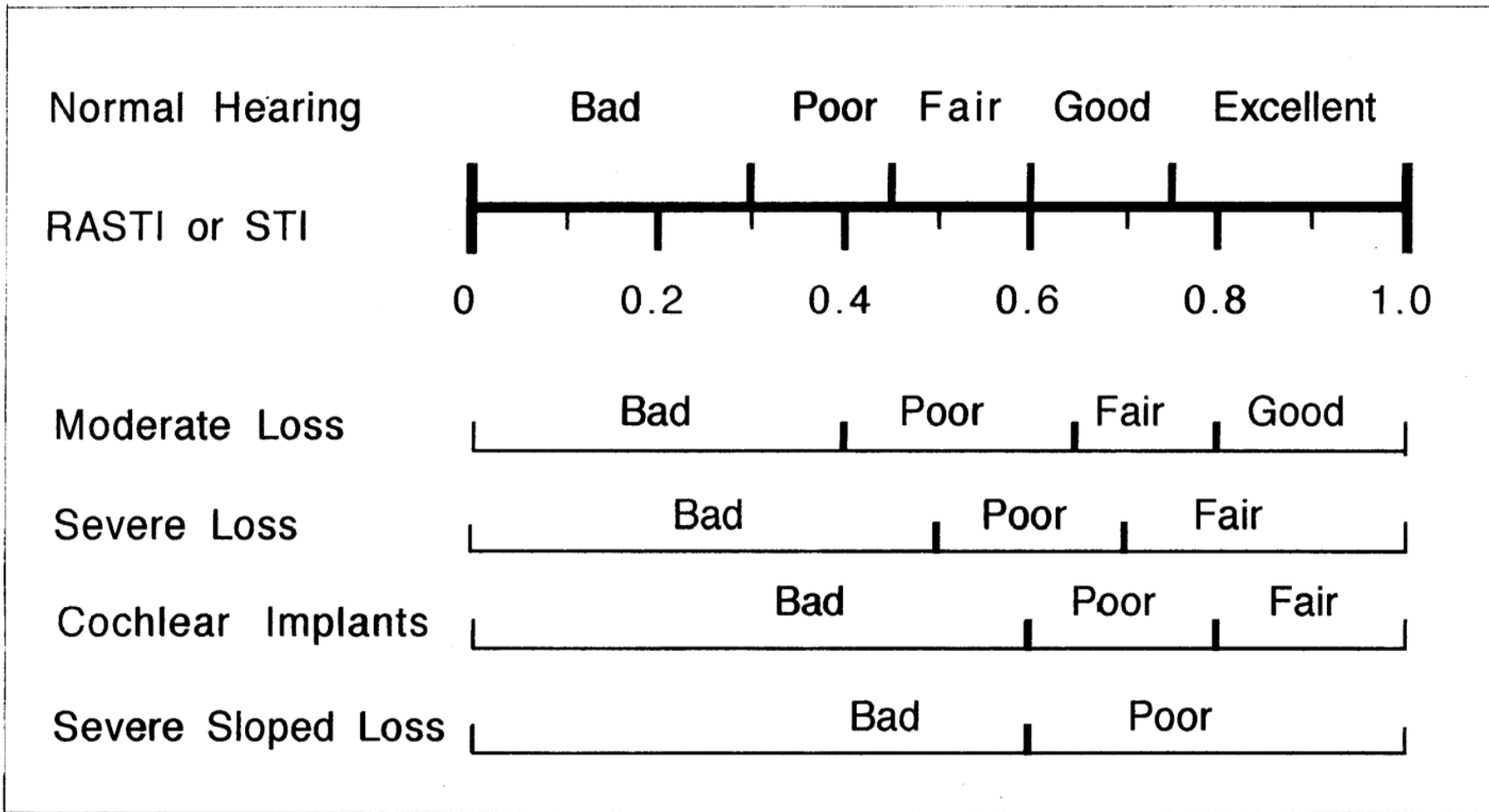


Figure 4. Qualitative Interpretation of RASTI values.