

# Introduction

A switch is turned on and a little girl's face lights up with pure joy. Catapulted out of her world of silence, she reacts with excitement. She hears her mother's voice for the first time in her young life and her mother cries. The clinician's eyes moisten and a tear gently rolls down his cheek.

The business of bringing sound to over 160 000 people around the world is full of emotion-packed moments like this. But it is a complex business and from initial idea to current reality was nearly 50 years in the making. As always, these great realities start from one person's journey. In this case it could be argued that it started with two people refusing to stay in the comfort zone of current reality and challenging the unknown to do what was thought to be impossible, especially in Australia. But had the story been left to these two extraordinary people, it would have been short. A number of other leaders with very different personalities that underpinned essential leadership styles and skill sets, took the baton and delivered the organisation, its people and its technology to the next level of development. As the baton-passing continued, the number of people catapulted out of their silent world grew exponentially. The amazing benefits that the technology has brought to the recipients, their families, their friends and their communities continue to drive the company and those who work to successfully bring sound to the severely and profoundly deaf.

Australians have long been recognised for their ground-breaking medical research and there are numerous Nobel Prizes as evidence. But as so many commentators have lamented, Australians don't seem to be able to commercialise these outstanding research achievements. The loss to the country's productivity is obvious and well documented. Why is this so? Is it just that Australian entrepreneurs don't have the backbone to take on the challenge, or are there barriers to such development that are too big to overcome? Is Australia doomed to stay in the upstream, research end of the business cycle? This book provides the evidence that the news is not necessarily