**ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION**

This document has been developed to assist members who are undecided as to whether they wish to register as an organ donor, or those who have made a decision but haven’t communicated those wishes to their families.

Whilst we encourage members to consider registering to be an organ donor, we understand that for various reasons, some members may not choose to do so. The completion of the options at the base of this page will assist families in carrying out your wishes in relation to participation, or not, in the organ donor program.

It’s important to also discuss your wishes with your family. Statistics show that of the 36% who feel confident they know if their loved ones are willing to be a donor, 93% say they would uphold their wishes.

The decision as to whether or not to register as an organ donor is an important one, possibly life saving, and we urge you to read the attached documents prior to making the decision.

The brochure ‘Register to be an organ and tissue donor” produced by the Australian Government Organ and Tissue Authority, is enclosed for information.

This document has been compiled by Nicole Frost, Welfare Coordinator, Ringwood RSL, in conjunction with the VVAA Outer Eastern Melbourne Sub-branch.

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**DECISION IN RELATION TO ORGAN/TISSUE DONATION**

Once you have decided on your position, please tick one of the boxes below.

The document should be stored along with other documents relating to your affairs.

**Yes.** I wish to participate in the organ donor program and have registered myself as an Organ Donor.

**No.** I do not wish to register as an organ donor, nor have organs or tissue removed, following my demise.

Comments in relation to my decision  
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|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Signed**  ............................................................... | **Date**  ........................................ |

**Organ Donation Information**

*Transplantation is only possible following the donation of organs and tissues from a living or deceased person. It involves the removal of an organ or tissue from one person (the donor) for transplant into another person (the recipient).*

*By deciding to become an organ and tissue donor, you can transform people's lives. At any time, there are around 1,400 Australians who are waiting for an organ transplant, sadly some people die waiting for a transplant.*

*Around 1,400 people are currently on the waiting list for a transplant, a further 11,000 people are on dialysis of whom many would benefit from a kidney transplant.*

***In 2017, 510 deceased and 273 living organ donors and their families gave 1,675 Australians a new chance at life.***

*****Ways to register:***  
Choose from one of the following:**

1. Complete and forward the form enclosed on the brochure included in your package.
2. Go to ***www.donatelife.gov.au*** and click on the ‘Join the Donor Register’ TAB and complete details.
3. Via the Department of Human Services Website page: ***https://www2.medicareaustralia.gov.au/pext/registerAodr/Pages/DonorRegistration.jsp*** and complete your details.
4. Register using your existing ‘MyGov’ account ***www.my.gov.au***
5. Register or update your details via the ‘Express Plus Medicare App’ or via ***www.humanservice.gov.au***

*Please note- Although you may have registered to donate, your medical advocate (or legal representative such as your power of attorney) will need to approve the donation at the appropriate time of death. Please ensure you have advised your advocate of your registration, so that they are aware for your future.*

*****Process:*****

Death must have occurred before donation can take place.

Death can be determined to have occurred in two ways:

1. *Brain death occurs when there is irreversible cessation of function of the brain.*
2. *Circulatory death occurs when there is irreversible circulation of blood in the body of the person.*

The way a person dies influences how the donation process occurs and which organs and tissues can be donated.

****About Transplantation****

**Transplantation can save and significantly improve the lives of many people who are sick or dying.**

**•Some people with heart failure, viral infection, or a congenital heart defect, require a heart transplant to survive.**

**•Lung transplants are often needed by people with cystic fibrosis or emphysema whose own lungs cannot provide enough oxygen to their bodies.**

**•People with severe kidney failure are on dialysis and will need a kidney transplant to stay alive.**

**•People with metabolic liver disease, Hepatitis B or C, and congenital liver defects such as Biliary Atresia can require liver transplants to stay alive.**

**•Intestinal transplantation can improve the lives of people with intestinal failure who can’t absorb the nutrients needed to grow or live a healthy life.**

**•Pancreas transplants can be an effective treatment for people with Type-1 Diabetes.**

**•Donation of eye tissue allows transplantation of the cornea (clear tissue covering the colored part of the eye) and the sclera (white part that surrounds the eye).**

**•Corneal transplants restore sight to people who are partially or completely blind due to corneal damage following a genetic condition, illness or injury.**

**•Scleral grafts can prevent blindness due to injury or in people who have had cancer removed from their eye.**

**•Donated bone tissue can be grafted to replace bone which has been lost as a result of tumors or through other disease or accidents. It is also used to aid fracture healing, strengthen hip and knee joint replacements, and to repair curvatures of the spine (scoliosis) in children and teenagers.**

**•Skin grafts are provided to people who have suffered extensive trauma, infection damaging or destroying the skin, or severe burns. When skin is donated, only a thin layer is retrieved, somewhat like the skin that peels in sunburn.**

**•Donated heart tissues such as heart valves are able to repair congenital defects in young children and babies, and also used to replace diseased valves in adults.**

***Visit*** [***www.donatelife.gov.au***](http://www.donatelife.gov.au) ***for additional information relating to Organ Donation.***

*# Reference- Information sourced from ‘Donate Life’* [*www.donatelife.gov.au*](http://www.donatelife.gov.au)

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

***These Questions and Answers have been obtained from the Federal Government Healthdirect website.***

Organ and tissue donation is a process that can help save and transform lives. We have put together a list of frequently asked questions to help you find answers and address worries around this emotionally charged topic.

It is important that you decide whether to become a donor and that you discuss and share your decision with your loved ones.

What is organ and tissue donation?

Organ donation is a life-saving and life-transforming medical process where organs are removed from a donor and transplanted into someone who is very ill or dying from organ failure. It can involve the kidneys, lungs, heart, liver, large intestine and pancreas.

Tissue donation is a medical process where tissue, such as heart valves, bone tissue, skin, ligaments, parts of the eye and pancreas tissue, is removed from a donor and transplanted into another person.

Why do people need transplants?

People who need an organ transplant are usually very ill or dying because an organ is failing. They range from babies through to older people.

A tissue transplant is sometimes needed to save a life, but it mostly improves the recipient’s life. One tissue donor can transform the lives of 10 or more people.

I don't need to donate my organs because thousands of others do

Few people actually die in such a way that donation is possible. For example, less than 1 to 2% of all hospital deaths are in the specific circumstances where organ donation may be possible.

There are also about 1,400 Australians waiting for a transplant on the official waiting list at any one time.

Only 1 in 3 Australians have joined the Australian Organ Donor Register.

Who can become a donor?

Almost anyone can become a donor, from babies and children through to older people, because there is no age limit on the donation of some organs and tissues. The determining factors are where and how a person dies, and the condition of their organs and tissues.

While your age and medical history will be a factor, you shouldn’t assume you’re too old, too young or not healthy enough to become a donor. Only some medical conditions may prevent you from becoming a donor such as a transmissible disease (for example, HIV).

Organ and tissue donation is against my religion

Most religions support organ and tissue donation as generous acts that benefit people. This includes Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism.

If you are not sure whether your religion is supportive, speak to your religious adviser. You can also read or download a fact sheet on organ and tissue donation in relation to all the major religions at [DonateLife](https://donatelife.gov.au/sites/default/files/Religion_facts.pdf" \t "_blank)

Will my family be able to view my body?

Yes. Removing organs and tissue is no different from any other surgical operation and is performed by highly skilled health professionals.

The donor’s body is always treated with dignity and respect, and the removal of organs and tissue does not alter the physical appearance of the body. Your family will still be able to view your body and have an open casket if they wish.

Will my organs and tissue be used for research?

Donated organs and tissue will never be used for medical research unless your family gives explicit, written permission for this to be done.

Will doctors work as hard to save my life if they know I’m a donor?

Yes. Medical staff will do everything possible to save your life. Organ and tissue donation will only be considered after all efforts to save your life have failed and you have been legally declared dead.

How does the organ and tissue donation process work?

When a person dies in a situation where they can become an organ and/or tissue donor, the possibility of donation is raised with the family.

The Australian Organ Donor Register is checked to find out if the deceased person had registered their wishes regarding organ and tissue donation. If they did register to be a donor, a donation specialist meets with the family to talk about donation.

The family of a potential donor is given time to discuss and reach a decision on whether to proceed, and if donation is agreed, documentation will confirm the donation and which organs and tissues will be used.

All states and territories have legal processes following family consent, and a designated officer not involved in the clinical management of a potential donor must give authority for donation to proceed. This part of the process may also involve the state coroner if the circumstances of the potential donor’s death are to be investigated.

During and after the process, the donor’s family is supported by [DonateLife](https://donatelife.gov.au/" \t "_blank) organ and tissue donation specialist staff. All donations and transplants are performed by specialist medical teams in the Australian public health system.

How are organs and tissue allocated?

Australia has strict guidelines about the allocation of organs and tissue. The Organ and Tissue Authority, the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Transplantation Society of Australia and New Zealand have developed [Ethical Guidelines for Organ Transplantation from Deceased Donors](https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/ethical-guidelines-organ-transplantation-deceased-donors) and the [Clinical Guidelines for Organ Transplantation from Deceased Donors](https://donatelife.gov.au/sites/default/files/TSANZ%20Clinical%20Guidelines%20for%20Organ%20Transplantation%20from%20Deceased%20Donors_Version%201.0_April%202016.pdf).

What is the Donor Register?

The Australian Organ Donor Register (the Donor Register) is the only national register for people aged 16 years of age or older to record their decision about becoming an organ and tissue donor.

The Donor Register ensures a person’s donation decision can be verified 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by authorised personnel anywhere in Australia. In the event of a person’s death, information about their donation decision, accessed from the Donor Register by authorised personnel, can be provided to the family of the deceased.

Recording your decision on the Donor Register is voluntary and you have a completely free choice about which organs and tissues you wish to donate. If you don’t want to become an organ and tissue donor, you can also register your decision **not** to donate on the Donor Register.

You cannot register decisions about donating organs and tissue for scientific research purposes on the Donor Register.

How do I register on the Donor Register?

You can register your donation decision:

**Online**

* your Medicare online account through [myGov](https://my.gov.au/" \t "_blank)
* the [Express Plus Medicare mobile app](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/express-plus-medicare-mobile-app)
* the [online form](https://donatelife.gov.au/register-donor-today) on the DonateLife website
* the [Australian Organ Donor Register form](https://www2.medicareaustralia.gov.au/pext/registerAodr/Pages/DonorRegistration.jsp)

**By printed form**

* Complete the form in the enclosed “*Register to be an organ and tissue donor*” brochure.

Even if you have previously registered your decision elsewhere (for example, by ticking a box on your driver’s licence renewal form), it is still important to register your donation decision on the Australian Organ Donor Register. This is because it is the only national register and details can be linked to your Medicare number. Except for South Australia, you can no longer register a donation decision via your driver’s licence.  
  
I’ve already registered to be an organ and tissue donor. Do I need to tell my family?

Yes. You need to discuss your decision with your family and friends, even if you have registered to be a donor. This is because the donation won’t proceed without your family’s consent, and they are less likely to give consent if they don’t know your wishes.

In fact, 40% of Australians do not know or are not sure of the donation wishes of their loved ones.

Further questions?

For enquiries about registering or updating your details on the Australian Organ Donor Register, or about replacing a lost Donor Register card, please visit donorregister.gov.au, enquire at a DHS Service Centre or call 1800 777 203 or email [aodr@humanservices.gov.au](mailto:aodr@humanservices.gov.au)

Sources:

[Department of Human Services](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/) *(Australian Organ Donor Register)*, [Organ and Tissue Authority](http://www.donatelife.gov.au/)*(donatelife.gov.au)*, [Kidney Health Australia](https://kidney.org.au/) *(Organ and tissue donation and transplantation)*

Last reviewed: October 2018

healthdirect.gov.au – Q & A - https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/organ-and-tissue-donation