



# Jillian Skinner MP

## Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### **RECORD NUMBERS GIVING THE GIFT OF LIFE IN NSW**

Organ donation rates have hit record highs in NSW, with eye and tissue donation also increasing to best ever levels, Health Minister Jillian Skinner revealed today.

Mrs Skinner made the announcement while officially opening the Lions NSW Eye Bank and the NSW Bone Bank at Sydney Hospital.

“It’s wonderful to be able to open this vital service while marking our highest ever levels of organ and tissue donation in NSW,” Mrs Skinner said.

“More people in NSW are making the life-saving choice to become an organ donor and as a result more people are receiving this life-changing surgery.

“Latest figures reveal the total number of organ donations in NSW from January to June this year sits at 58 - the state’s highest ever level of donation at this time of year. Consent rates have also increased.

“As of 30 April this year, 2,350,478 people from NSW had registered their wishes to donate their organs and/or tissue on the Australian Organ Donation Register. This figure has increased by 5,349 people since 31 December 2012.

“It’s remarkable and rewarding to see such a jump in organ and tissue donation figures, particularly since the NSW Government launched its *Increasing Organ Donation in NSW* strategy in August last year.

“These results are heartening but there is still more to be done and I encourage members of the public to sign up, as I have, to the Australian Organ Donor Register,” Mrs Skinner said.

Mrs Skinner said the NSW Government committed \$600,000 to the establishment of the Lions NSW Eye Bank and the NSW Bone Bank, which will complement the state’s improved rates of eye and bone tissue donation.

“This year alone, the Lions NSW Eye Bank and the NSW Bone Bank is set to improve the health outcomes of more than 1200 people.

“The development of this new eye and bone bank follows a decision to co-locate eye and tissue donation services to further improve services for patients and better facilitate donations and transplant surgery.

“Already we’re seeing huge advances in the area of eye donation with a 30 per cent increase in the number of eye donors in NSW from 335 in 2011 to 437 in 2012. Corneal transplant waiting lists also fell in the same period by 43 per cent.

“With regard to tissue donation, femoral head donations – used in hip surgery – were up by 51 per cent and musculoskeletal donors rose by 16 per cent in this period.

“This is evidence that the NSW Government’s approach to promoting organ and tissue donation is working and, while we still have some way to go, these new figures reveal a great improvement in NSW donation and awareness rates,” Mrs Skinner said.

The Lions NSW Eye Bank and the NSW Bone Bank are a state-wide clinical service for the identification and coordination of eye and tissue donors. The bank manages the retrieval, storage and distribution of corneas in NSW and the ACT.

Corneas are transplanted to restore vision for people who have become blind because their cornea is cloudy or irregular in shape due to injury, disease or infection.

The service also manages the retrieval and storage of musculoskeletal tissue from living and deceased donors, which is used for orthopaedic and neurosurgical procedures for conditions including hip replacements, knee reconstructions and spinal surgery.

In August 2012, the NSW Government released *Increasing Organ Donation in NSW: Government Plan 2012* to bolster low rates of organ donation in the state.

Initiatives of the plan include:

- The closure of the NSW Roads and Maritime Services (formerly RTA) organ donor register, moving to the single national Australian Organ Donor Register, administered by Medicare;
- Increasing community education and awareness campaigns to encourage people to have discussions with their families about organ donation;
- Employing specialist doctors and nurses in hospitals to support families through the donation process;
- Promoting living donor programs.

“One organ and tissue donor can transform the lives of ten or more people and one conversation with your family today could go on to save the lives of many,” Mrs Skinner said.

For more information on the *Increasing Organ Donation in NSW* plan, visit [http://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/NSW\\_Organ\\_Donation/docs/organ\\_donationstrategy.pdf](http://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/NSW_Organ_Donation/docs/organ_donationstrategy.pdf)

For more information on current organ and tissue donation rates in NSW, visit [http://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/NSW\\_Organ\\_Donation/may2013.asp](http://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/NSW_Organ_Donation/may2013.asp)