



Jillian Skinner MP

Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 21 November 2013

ORGAN DONATION: THE GIFT OF LIFE

A collection of personal stories about the life-changing impact of organ donation was launched today by Health Minister Jillian Skinner at NSW Parliament House.

The launch of *The Gift: Stories from Transplant Australia's Journey of Hope* coincides with the opening in Sydney of the 2013 Congress of the International Society for Organ Donation and Procurement. The NSW Government committed \$25,000 to sponsor the congress.

"You cannot read the incredible stories of organ recipients whose lives have been saved without remembering the enormity of the gift given by donors and their families in a time of great sadness," Mrs Skinner told guests at the launch, who included Fiona Coote, Australia's longest surviving heart transplant recipient.

"This important book challenges us all to consider organ donation and make our decision known to our loved ones."

Mrs Skinner said the *NSW Government Plan: Increasing Organ Donation in NSW* has led to record increases in organ donation since its launch last year.

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.

"Organ donation is a rare event. Just one per cent of people who die in hospital are eligible to become organ donors," Mrs Skinner said.

"The most donors NSW has had in a single year is 88 but this year, to date, there have been 94 donors in NSW. We are on track to meet our 2013 target - 108 donors for the year.

"As of 30 September, 2,356,132 people from NSW had registered their wishes to donate their organs and/or tissue on the Australian Organ Donation Register – an

“The NSW Bone Bank has received its greatest number of donated femoral heads (used for orthopaedic procedures) in any calendar year, while the Lions NSW Eye Bank continues to meet demand for tissue needed in eye surgery.

“These figures are very pleasing and I’m committed to ensuring we meet more milestones on our journey to increasing organ donation rates in NSW,” Mrs Skinner said.

Transplant Australia chief executive Chris Thomas said *The Gift: Stories from Transplant Australia’s Journey of Hope* aims to give hope to those waiting to receive a donated organ.

“This book will help provide comfort and confidence to those waiting, helping them to understand there is life after transplantation,” Mr Thomas said.

The NSW Government is working with the Australian Organ and Tissue Authority to fundamentally change clinical practice around organ donation and end of life care in Australia.

“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-saving surgery,” Mrs Skinner said.

“One organ and tissue donor can transform the lives of 10 or more people. One conversation with your family today could go on to save the lives of many.”

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