



# Jillian Skinner MP

## Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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Friday 24 October 2014

#### **WORLD-FIRST HEART TRANSPLANT SUCCESS FOR ST VINCENT'S HOSPITAL**

Health Minister Jillian Skinner today congratulated St Vincent's Hospital Heart Lung Transplant Unit on successfully pioneering a world-first heart transplant technique.

Mrs Skinner visited St Vincent's Hospital to celebrate the breakthrough, which allows hearts to be donated after circulatory death (DCD) and transported from remote sites with portable organ preservation technology.

Mrs Skinner met Sydney woman Michelle Gribilas, who recently became the world's first distantly-procured DCD heart transplant recipient. She also met the second transplant recipient, Sydney man Jan Damen, who received his new heart via the technique a fortnight ago.

Previously, transplant units relied solely on donor hearts from brain-dead patients whose hearts were still beating. The use of DCD hearts - where the heart is no longer beating - is an historic step forward in organ donation.

"The extraordinary work of the late Dr Victor Chang lives on at St Vincent's Hospital," Mrs Skinner said.

"To retrieve a dormant heart, resuscitate and transport it from a distant site in a method St Vincent's has dubbed 'heart in a box' is a game-changer in organ donation.

"Our great hope is this technique will greatly increase the pool of available donor hearts, giving hope to those living with heart disease and facing end-stage cardiac failure."

Mrs Skinner said NSW has a well-deserved reputation as a centre of excellence in cardiac surgery and innovation, both in Australia and abroad.

"NSW leads the nation in organ transplantation excellence, not just through St Vincent's but at hospitals such as RPA, Westmead, Prince of Wales, Royal North Shore and John Hunter," Mrs Skinner said.

"The skill and the determination of these transplant teams is inspiring, as is their determination to keep discovering new techniques and delivering better clinical outcomes for their patients.

"The only thing holding them back is the availability of donor organs."

Mrs Skinner said 2013 was a record year in organ donation and transplants in NSW, with a 16 per cent increase in donors (102, up from 88 in 2012).

But, after a strong start to 2014, donations have plateaued.

As of this week, there were 78 organ donors - short of what is needed to reach the nationally-agreed 12-month target for NSW of 120.

From these 78 donors, 224 organs were successfully transplanted into 206 recipients.

“Organ donation is a very rare event - only about one per cent of deaths occur in circumstances which allow organ donation to take place,” Mrs Skinner said.

“It is remarkable to think that one organ and tissue donor can transform the lives of ten or more people.

“Today I urge anyone who is eligible to be an organ or tissue donor to consider being a donor - then share that wish with loved ones and to register on the Australian Organ Donor Register.”

Organ and tissue donation records in NSW are kept by the NSW Organ and Tissue Donation Service, which reports that 1416 organs have been transplanted from 451 organ donors in its five years of operation.

For more information on organ and tissue donation in NSW visit: [www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/SESLHDOrgan](http://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/SESLHDOrgan)

To view the *Increasing Organ Donation in NSW: Government Plan 2012*, visit: [http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2012/pdf/organ\\_donation.pdf](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2012/pdf/organ_donation.pdf)