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MEDIA RELEASE

Closing the 'Consent Gap' through Australia's most inspirational sporting event

Transplant Australia and NSW Health are to embark on a program to help close the 'consent gap' in organ and tissue donation.

NSW Minister for Health and Medical Research, The Hon. Jillian Skinner, announced that Western Sydney will host the Australian Transplant Games in 2016.

The launch will be held at Pepper Stadium Penrith in association with the Penrith Panthers Rugby League team which will be a community partner with the Games in 2016.

Recognised as one of Australia's most inspirational sporting events, the Australian Transplant Games aims to demonstrate the 'living proof' that organ and tissue donation saves lives.

Transplant Australia believes there is an urgent need to close the 'consent gap', especially in relation to multi-cultural communities living in Western Sydney.

Transplant Australia CEO, Chris Thomas, explained the 'consent gap' was the difference between the percentage of Australians who say they support donation in surveys and opinion polls and the actual percentage of families who consent to their loved one's becoming donors.

"Close to 90 per cent of Australians state they believe in and support donation. Yet in NSW our rate of family consent in 2014 was just 55 per cent. This means almost one in two families is declining the opportunity to donate their loved one's organs to help others live," Mr Thomas said.

Health Minister Skinner said the NSW Government was determined to improve the system of organ and tissue donation in our hospitals.

"We are very pleased with the progress that has been made. However to help NSW achieve further donations to save lives it is essential that we improve the community's understanding and participation in donation," Minister Skinner said.

"NSW residents should be proud of our first class donation and transplantation systems. To make this on par with the world's best however we need every resident in NSW to consider organ donation, to register to become a donor, and to inform their loved one's of their decision."

Transplant Australia undertakes the staging of the Australian Transplant Games to promote the benefits of donation and transplantation and to help transplant recipients strive towards improved health and fitness.

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Transplant Australia welcomed the NSW Government's support for the Games to be held in Western Sydney, the heart of multicultural Australia, for a week in late September, 2016.

Competitors at the Games are able to live out healthy and rewarding lives because of someone else's generosity. These Games will uniquely focus on the extra years of life received and the accomplishments and successes within that time that would not have been possible without receiving a transplant.

Sport and Recreation Minister Stuart Ayres said: "The Games emphasise the importance of helping people who are previously ill make the most of their renewed health and wellness by encouraging them to participate in physical activity."

Supporting this belief are community partners Penrith Panthers Rugby League Club. Being the number one sporting club in Western Sydney, Penrith players will be in attendance at the launch to help promote the message to multicultural communities.

Transplant Australia NSW Chairman, Michael Kennedy, believes the Australian Transplant Games give the opportunity for people within multicultural communities to see the living, breathing and competing beneficiaries of organ donation.

"To see kids go from having a few months to live to playing and participating in physical activity is a strong endorsement for the Games," Mr Kennedy said.

The Australian Transplant Games will attract transplant recipients, donor families, living donors and their supporters from all across Australia and up to 10 other countries. Transplant Australia expects up to 1,000 people will converge to Western Sydney for the Games. This includes transplant physicians and nurses who volunteer their services at the Games and importantly get to witness the success of their work.

Including more than 20 sports, the Games range from high exertion sports such as athletics and swimming through to sports such as ten pin bowling and petanque. The Games will be held at internationally renowned venues including the Sydney International Regatta Centre along with Blacktown International Sports Park.

The Games will be returning to NSW after being held in Melbourne in 2014. The Melbourne Games were extremely successful in influencing the donation rate in Victoria. Last year Victoria achieved the highest ever number of transplants, transforming 352 lives – 66 more than the previous year.

The Games provide a focal point for raising awareness of organ and tissue donation, illustrating the importance for all Australians to sign onto the register. Transplant Australia hopes to echo the success seen in Melbourne and change the perspective of the Western Sydneysiders and ultimately reduce the amount of people waiting for their life-saving gift.

Mr Thomas said Transplant Australia is committed to working with NSW Health and the Organ and Tissue Authority to promote the donation message and encourage all Australians to sign on as organ and tissue donors.

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About the Australian Transplant Games

The Australian Transplant Games are held every two years and celebrate the success of transplantation and encourage Australian families to discuss organ and tissue donation. They are open to transplant recipients, donor families, living donors, people on dialysis or awaiting a transplant and supporters.

The Organ and Tissue Authority is the major sponsor of the Australian Transplant Games. NSW Health and the Australian Sports Commission are the Major Supporters of the Games.

About Transplant Australia

Transplant Australia exists to make the most of life – promoting the life-saving benefits of organ and tissue donation to the Australian public and supporting those most vulnerable through their journey back to the fullness of life.

Its vision is for Australia to lead the world in organ and tissue donation and transplantation - saving lives, improving quality of life and providing much-needed care and support.

How to register as an organ and tissue donor

Register your donation decision and sign on to save lives by telephoning:

1800 777203 or

Visiting your Medicare Service Centre

For further information about organ and tissue donation visit donatelifegov.au

Further Information

For further information about the Transplant Games please contact Elise Giallonardo on 0401 493 437 or visit the following websites:

www.australiantransplantgames.com

www.transplant.org.au

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