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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Equal access to transplantation a top priority

**Transplant Australia today welcomed a government report which calls for new strategies to ensure that all Australians, regardless of their ethnic background or geographical location, have access to life-saving transplantation.**

Transplant Australia has long been concerned that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have a far higher incidence of kidney disease yet are significantly under-represented on transplant waiting lists.

Equally the **EY Review of the Australian Organ Donation, Retrieval and Transplantation System** released today outlined the disadvantage rural and remote Australians have in terms of access to transplantation.

**Transplant Australia was also pleased the review recommended consideration of organ donation registration through drivers licencing systems to a national register.**

Transplant Australia CEO, Chris Thomas, welcomed the report as it gave those waiting for a transplant confidence that the organ donation and transplantation sectors were striving to continue to increase access to life-saving transplants for all Australians.

“It has been 11 years since organ donation was reformed in Australia and in that time we have achieved tremendous success with donation rates more than doubling. There are literally thousands of additional Australians alive today because of these reforms,” Mr Thomas said.

“However for Australia to rank in the top five of donation nations across the world more needs to be done. We need greater consistency in transplant practices across all states and in all transplant units. And we need greater focus to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and those living remotely have equal access to life-saving transplants.”

Transplant Australia, as the national community voice for transplant recipients, those waiting, living donors and donor families, provides a valuable role in showcasing the lives of those saved by transplantation.

“This work, through activities such as the staging of the Australian Transplant Games, has never been more critical. If we are to be successful, this Report shows that all Governments will need to allocate additional resources to donation and transplantation. Our members are the living proof that this investment is worth every cent,” Mr Thomas said.



“Our programs demonstrate what can be achieved with a transplant. Whether it is a young child who receives a liver transplant enabling them to return to school, a parent who gets to go back to work or a grandparent who is able to enjoy the latter years of their life, the gift of life benefits thousands of people and their families.”

Transplant Australia had advocated for organ donation registration to be available at the point of drivers licence application and renewal and was pleased the review addressed this.

“Generations of Australians knew this as the one way to make your decision about donation known. The sooner we get it back on the drivers licence feeding into the one national register the sooner we can encourage all Australians to make a decision to save others,” Mr Thomas said.

Registration makes the difference with families supporting that decision in excess of nine times out of 10. Conversely the family consent rate drops to just over 50 per cent where a person has not registered or discussed it with their family.

Transplant Australia is pleased that the Organ & Tissue Authority has been earmarked to provide greater oversight of both donation and transplantation.

Crucial to this success will be the need to work closely with the Transplant Society of Australia and New Zealand and also consumers, which the review found had ‘limited input into governance structures and strategic aspects of the system’.

“Obviously it will need greater funding. But transplantation is regarded as a cost-effective treatment for a range of diseases and conditions. It gives patients new life and with some of our recipients now 40 and 50 years with their transplant, it is perhaps the most important medical development of the last half of last century,” Mr Thomas said.

Transplant Australia looks forward to working the Federal Government and congratulates Minister for responsible for organ donation, Minister Mark Coulton, on today’s release of the review.

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