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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Organ Donation Rates for 2021**

**Transplant Australia today expressed its gratitude to the nation's DonateLife and transplantation staff for their dedication in 2021 in sustaining organ donation and life-saving transplantation.**

Transplant Australia CEO, Chris Thomas, reflected on the release of the 2021 Australian Donation and Transplantation Activity Report which showed a nine per cent decrease in donation rates during another difficult year.

"After a decade of solid growth in donation and transplantation in Australia it is naturally concerning to all those waiting for a transplant to see overall rates decline for the second year in a row," Mr Thomas said.

"Transplant Australia will of course continue to advocate for the 1,850 Australians on these waiting lists.

"However, Australia's experience in donation has been repeated throughout the world and it is clear the pandemic has significantly impacted our hospital systems. There's been extra pressures on intensive care units, and hospital visitor restrictions have impacted conversations about donation. Transplant units have also needed to weigh up risks relating to transplantation and COVID. On top of this, logistics such as a decrease in domestic flights and border restrictions have made it extremely challenging for all DonateLife and transplant unit staff.

"Most importantly, we should thank the 421 donors and their families for providing life-saving transplants for 1,174 patients. They have made a world of difference. Just as importantly, we should thank Donatelife staff, the Organ and Tissue Authority and transplant staff for their continued dedication. It is plain to see the struggles all frontline hospital staff have endured during this pandemic."

Transplant Australia was pleased there had been an increase in living donor rates from 2020 with 203 Australians taking the decision to provide this life-saving gift and plans to promote living donation further with its Living Kidney Donor Program.

Transplant Australia will continue to advocate for further improvements to the donation and transplantation systems, including a return to donor registration as an option when renewing a driver's licence. Additional focus needs to be placed on improving the national consent rate - 56 per cent in 2021.



“The Activity Report demonstrates the positive impact of driver’s licence registration right here in Australia – in South Australia. It is the only state to have driver’s licence registration, and consistently has the highest registration rate (73 per cent compared to a national registration rate of 36 per cent). In 2021, they also had the highest consent rate in Australia – 73 per cent compared to a national consent rate of 56 per cent,” Mr Thomas said.

“We know that nine out of 10 families will consent to donation when their loved one is a registered donor. And we know that rate drops to just 4 in 10 families saying yes when they are not registered and are not aware if their family member wanted to be a donor.

“Clearly high registration rates in South Australia continue to result in high consent rates. We are appreciative of those families respecting their loved one’s decision to leave a legacy like no other.

“As we emerge from the pandemic, we need to make the case for all states to reconnect donor registration with renewing a driver’s licence and for those registrations to be linked to the Australian Organ Donor Register. Improving the consent rate is the best way to help all those waiting for this life-saving gift.”

**For further information**

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