

Organ donation in the Territory

Letter from Helen Stewart, NT Donor Coordinator, LifeNet NT

Organ donation can affect all of us. It may be as a friend or family member of an organ donor, or knowing someone who has received an organ transplant. As the Northern Territory has the highest incidence of kidney disease, the likelihood of meeting someone that needs or has had a kidney transplant is extremely high.

There are approximately 2,000 people Australia-wide waiting for an organ transplant each year, many of whom will die before ever receiving a suitable organ.

Despite transplant success rates being amongst the best in the world, Australia has one of the lowest organ donation rates within developed countries. For Australians suffering a life-threatening or serious illness, receiving a generous gift of an organ or tissue donation may mean a second chance at life, or improved quality of life.

Currently there are 5,931 Territorians (2.96 per cent of the population) who have signed onto the Australian Organ Donor Register, making a formal decision to be an organ donor if they were to suffer a severe head injury causing death.

Transplantation surgery is not performed in the Northern Territory for those who are ill enough to require a new organ, at present. Although Royal Darwin and Alice Springs hospitals have been participating in fulfilling the wishes of those who desire to donate their loved ones organs to give the greatest gift of life.

In the last 22 years, 31 members of the community in the Territory have given the gift of life and health to over 70 Australians.

In providing education to the community, the perception of some people towards organ donation involves placing their intended wish to donate in their Last Will and Testament. Unfortunately by the time many wills are read, a period of weeks may go by, and this will have been too late for a person's intentions to be honoured. The most important thing is

for families to discuss this issue amongst themselves. If they wish to make their intention more formal they should consider signing onto the Australian Organ Donor Register.

This information obviously needs to be relayed to clients who are seeking the services of those within the Law Society to produce their Last Will and Testament and are keen to donate their organs and/or tissues if they die.

Deciding to be an organ donor involves thinking and talking about organ donation with your family. The next step is to make your intention known by joining the Australian Organ Donor Registry.

This can occur in several ways:-

- * Calling LifeNet NT (8922 8786) - the Northern Territory Organ Donation Agency (who can provide you with registration forms for your clients);
- * Obtaining a registration form at any Medicare office or a Motor Vehicle Registry Office;
- * Telephoning the toll free number **1800 777 203** during business hours; or
- * Visiting the Health Insurance Commission website: www.hic.gov.au/ ①

New copyright protection for Indigenous communities

Proposed amendments to the Copyright Act will enable Indigenous communities to take legal action to protect against inappropriate, derogatory or culturally insensitive use of copyright material.

The amendments, which will be introduced into Federal Parliament later this year, will give Indigenous communities legal standing to safeguard the integrity of creative works embodying traditional community knowledge and wisdom.

The moral rights provisions of the Copyright Act give individual authors the right to be identified as the author or artist of their work and to take action to prevent false identification of the author or derogatory treatment of these

copyright works and films.

However, Indigenous communities do not currently have legal standing to bring moral rights court actions regarding the treatment of Indigenous material.

This legislation would introduce Indigenous communal moral rights in relation to artistic works, based on an agreement between the author/artist and the Indigenous community. These rights could be independently exercised by the community and would mirror the nature and scope of authors' moral rights as far as possible.

The legislation aims to provide a simple, workable and practical scheme for Indigenous communities, artists, galleries and the public. ①

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