



**THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP**  
**Minister for Health**

**THE HON SHAYNE NEUMANN MP**  
**Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing**

**JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

7 April 2013

**Supporting Paid Leave for Living Organ Donors**

In an historic initiative to support living organ donors, the Gillard government will pay employees who wish to become donors up to six weeks of salary.

Health Minister Tanya Plibersek and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing Shayne Neumann today announced the government would commit \$1.3 million over two years for a trial of the initiative. The Government will review and consider outcomes of the trial in early 2015.

"Living donors make an incredibly generous gift, and the Gillard government believes this act of kindness should be recognised and supported," said Ms Plibersek.

"Because the procedure to transplant an organ is not without risk to the donor, we want to ensure they are assisted during the recovery period after surgery."

Ms Plibersek said the salary will be based on the national minimum wage and be paid to employers who will pass the money onto donor employees.

Mr Neumann said a living organ donor is someone who provides a life-saving or life transforming gift to another person.

"This new initiative will help alleviate some of the financial burden for donors, who usually donate to someone they have a strong emotional attachment like their child, partner or good friend," said Mr Neumann.

"A significant amount of time is required for medical evaluation prior to surgery, resulting in some donors needing to take leave-without-pay from work during this period."

Mr Neumann said between 2006 and 2012, there was an average of 288 living organ donors each year. More than 99% of living donations in Australia involve the donation of a kidney, but a partial liver may be donated.

Ms Plibersek said she hoped the initiative would raise the profile of living organ donors and that donors were given support by their employers.

“As the salary will be based on the national minimum wage, we encourage employers to adopt leave policies for living organ donors and consider topping-up donor wages while donors are recovering.”

In July 2008, the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the government’s \$151 million national reform package to substantially lift organ and tissue donation rates.

The Australian Organ and Tissue Authority ([www.donatelife.gov.au](http://www.donatelife.gov.au)) was established to work in partnership with states and territories to improve access to life saving and life transforming transplants for all Australians in need through a sustained increase in organ and tissue donation. The DonateLife Network was established across Australia in 2009.

In 2012, 354 deceased organ donors transformed the lives of 1,052 Australians. The 5% increase in 2012 built on the 9% increase in 2011 (337) and represents a 43% increase over 2009 (247), the year the DonateLife Network was established.

**Background:**

End stage kidney disease (ESKD) is a major cost to the health system. A report on the economic impact of ESKD in Australia Cass et al (2010), The economic impact of end-stage kidney disease in Australia: projections to 2020. Published by Kidney Health Australia predicts that the annual health sector costs of treating all Australian cases of ESKD will increase from approximately \$890 million in 2009 to almost \$1.1 billion in 2020.

As of 3 December 2012, 1080 Australians were officially listed as waiting for a kidney transplant <http://www.anzdata.org.au/anzod/updates/anzod2012summary.pdf>. There have been significant annual increases in the deceased donation rate since the implementation of the national reform agenda, and 606 people received a kidney transplant from a deceased donor in 2012.