

## **GIFT OF LIFE INCORPORATED – PRESIDENT’S REPORT DAVID O’LEARY – AGM – 15 APRIL 2015**

Gift of Life has continued to pursue its main priorities: policy advocacy as well as promotion of greater community awareness and education through events and activities aimed at increasing organ and tissue donation.

We have raised a number of issues with the Government such as “soft” First Person Consent, extended criteria for organ transplantation, equity of access to donated organs, living donation and assistance with the logistic costs of transport and accommodation for those from regional areas re-locating to cities for transplantation.

Membership of the Organ and Tissue Advisory Council and the NHMRC Expert Group examining ethical guidelines for organ transplantation has offered excellent opportunities for additional input and influence. We also participated in the OTA Communications Charter signatories meeting and the DonateLife ACT community and consumer advisory committee.

We have organised a range of events and activities. Gift of Life’s DonateLife Walk in February 2014 during DonateLife Week attracted high profile representation for the launch and over 4,000 participants. The most recent event on 25 February 2015 – sponsored by the Organ and Tissue Authority - attracted around 5,000 participants and was launched for the first time by the Governor-General as a major feature of the national DonateLife campaign.

Gift of Life’s Awards for ACT citizens who have made a major contribution to community awareness of organ and tissue donation, presented by the ACT Chief Minister, involved around 80 guests in November 2014 at the Legislative Assembly. Both the Walks and the Awards attracted strong media coverage.

We also took part in orientation week at the ANU and Market Day at the University of Canberra and addressed third year medical students at the ANU in a joint presentation with the OTA and DonateLife ACT.

We have continued to pursue closer links to the ACT business community and are now seeking to establish links with the newly formed Canberra Business Chamber.

In 2014, while the number of Australians who donated fell by 3%, the conversion rate increased resulting in the overall number of transplant recipients falling by a small number. This reinforces the need to lift Australia’s rate of organ and tissue donation in future - in particular, to lift family consent rates to a much higher level as well as to examine opportunities to expand the donor pool. There is a need to encourage people to discuss organ and tissue donation with their family and close friends and to ask and know each other’s donation decision. It is also important to register that decision on the Australian Organ Donor Register. Significant progress is being achieved through the Government’s reform program, but this process will take time and much more remains to be done.