



Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash
Minister for Rural Health
Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate

Tuesday, 2 February 2016

Minister Nash releases independent organ donation and transplantation review

The Coalition Government today welcomed the independent review into the organ donation and transplantation sector.

Work is already underway to implement some recommendations and the Federal Government will continue to work with all stakeholders to save more lives through organ donation and transplantation.

Releasing the review today, Minister responsible for organ donation Fiona Nash said the Review by Ernst and Young found the existing strategy to increase organ donations was “sound; however there is still significant room for improvement of donation rates” which requires “effective implementation and monitoring of the strategy nationally”.

The review makes recommendations around governance, transparency and accountability.

The review recommended:

- New governance arrangements - a new Board of Governance to provide stronger oversight and support for the work of the Organ and Tissue Authority
- The publication of the breakdown of State and Territory funding on the OTA website
- Organ and tissue donation data to be made public on a hospital by hospital and a state by state basis
- Minimum standards for the auditing of organ donation practices to be defined
- The Donate Life Network to monitor the proportion of ICU specialists, staff and trainees in each hospital who have been trained in having the donation conversation with families
- States and Territories to clearly define who is responsible for organ donation rates in their jurisdiction
- Proceeding with a one-step online donor registration process (which the government has been working on, expected to launch in May), supported by a social media awareness campaign.

Minister Nash called for cultural change around organ donation and transplantation.

“In Australia, we worship our sporting stars and we rightly honour our war heroes, with memorials bearing their names.

“Organ donors are real heroes who save lives. Let’s admire organ donors with the same passion we admire stars in sport or music or whatever our particular interest is.

“Donor families, who consent to the donation going ahead, need to be recognised for the amazing gift they give. Intensive care clinicians who retrieve and implant organs need to be recognised for the life changing work they do day in and day out. Donor nurses should also be acknowledged for the life-saving work they do.

“Hospitals need to see organ donation as a key priority. I look forward to fostering a friendly competitive rivalry between the states and territories and individual hospitals as to who has the better organ donation rate through publicising their results.

“Almost all Australians would like to be able to receive a donated organ themselves to save their life, or for their child or parent, if it was required to save their life. Yet the vast majority of Australians are not registered as organ donors. Every Australian can help improve Australia’s organ donation and transplantation rate – they can register as an organ donor. If we increase the number of registered organ donors, we will save more lives.

“As of May, registering to become an organ donor will be a one-step, online process able to be completed in less than 10 minutes. The government will run an awareness campaign but government can’t increase the number of organ donors on its own – it’s up to Australians to register as organ donors.

“Further, the report notes ‘defensiveness’ in the sector and calls for ‘open and transparent dialogue’,” Minister Nash said.

“I hope more transparency helps foster open dialogue. However, let me be clear: I’m not interested in personalities. I’m interested in saving lives through organ donation. I ask all parties to join with me as we try to achieve the goal we all share – increasing organ donation and transplantation in Australia.”

Donor Families Australia Chairman Bruce McDowell congratulated Minister Nash for her commitment to increase organ donation and transplantation.

“With the combined efforts of all involved hopefully more recipients will be the beneficiaries of an increase in organ and tissue donation rates,” Mr McDowell said.

Transplant Australia Chairman, Jason Ryan, said the review should give those on the transplant waiting list confidence that the Federal Government was doing everything possible to ensure Australia maximised its donation rate.

“Transplant Australia welcomes the release and recommendations of an independent review into the performance of the organ and tissue donation sector in Australia. We are committed to working with Federal and State governments to implement all necessary changes.”

The review also confirmed the extra \$10.2 million over two years in the 2015-16 Budget was well targeted.

The Review of the Implementation of the National Reform Agenda on organ and tissue donation and transplantation, is available at:
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/review-implementation-of-national-reform-agenda-organ-tissue-donation-transplantation>

Media contact: Les White 0409 805 122 les.white@health.gov.au