

GIFT OF LIFE INCORPORATED – PRESIDENT’S REPORT AGM – 31 OCTOBER 2019

Gift of Life 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 and registration.

We met with the CEO of the Organ and Tissue Authority (OTA), Lucinda Barry, during the year. She attended our 2018 Walk and the official opening of the Gift of Life Garden at the National Arboretum Canberra. We also discussed with her ways of increasing consent rates through encouraging the involvement of more medical staff, including intensivists and nurses, in the best means of conducting the family donation conversation and efforts to widen the donor pool through extended criteria for transplantation. We also pressed for lifting resource constraints on transplant units within hospitals that are becoming increasingly stretched. We welcomed Gift of Life involvement in newly established meetings of the OTA Community Engagement Group and also participated in regular DonateLife ACT advisory committee meetings. GoLi also presented a submission covering a range of issues to the second Ernst & Young Review for the Government on organ and tissue donation and transplantation likely to be released late in 2019.

The 2019 Walk held around Lake Burley Griffin for the 13th year on 13 February with around 5,200 participants was launched by the Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove accompanied by Lady Cosgrove as well as Federal Minister responsible for the Organ and Tissue Authority Ken Wyatt, with ACT Member for Ginninderra, Tara Cheyne also attending. The Walk was supported by grants from the OTA and ACT Health and is a significant feature of the national DonateLife campaign in promoting greater awareness and in encouraging people to sign onto the Australian Organ Donor Register.

We cooperated closely with the National Arboretum Canberra in the design and establishment of the Gift of Life Garden at the Arboretum. The Garden was opened by Tara Cheyne on 25 November 2018 with Federal Minister Ken Wyatt also attending. A function was held immediately afterwards at the nearby Margaret Whitlam Pavilion with addresses given by Minister Ken Wyatt and A/Prof Kumud Dhital, a leading heart transplant surgeon at St Vincent’s Private Hospital in Sydney. Around 100 Members of the ACT transplant community, medical staff as well as financial donors to the project were invited to the function. The Garden and associated sculpture is beautifully designed and, as a national project, will be an important attraction to the large numbers of visitors to the National Arboretum in future.

We arranged stalls during orientation week at Market Day events at both the Australian National University and University of Canberra and gave an address to the DonateLife ACT Remembrance Service regarding the recently established Gift of Life Garden with a photo presentation.

Good progress was achieved during 2018 for numbers of donations and successful transplants in Australia. There remains a need to boost Australia’s

rate of organ and tissue donation - in particular, while the family consent rate has lifted to 64% in 2018-19, efforts must continue to lift this level further as well as to expand the donor pool. We encourage people to discuss organ and tissue donation with their family and close friends and to ask and know each other's donation decision. The importance of registering that decision on the Australian Organ Donor Register is emphasised. Significant progress is being achieved through the Government's reform program, but the process will take time and much more remains to be done.

David O'Leary, President, Gift of Life Incorporated