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GIVE THE GIFT OF LIFE THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON

The AMA is urging Australians to take some time during the festive season to consider giving the greatest gift of all – registering to become an organ and tissue donor.

Australia has low rates of organ donation by international standards, and there are around 1600 people awaiting a transplant at any one time.

“Becoming an organ donor can, quite literally, be a lifesaving decision,” Professor Owler said. “Just one donor can transform the lives of 10 other people.”

Although more than two-thirds of Australians are willing to become an organ donor, many fail to put their wishes into action by registering as a donor and, just as importantly, discussing their decision with their loved ones.

Professor Owler said that, all too frequently, families are kept in the dark about a donor’s wishes, and the donation does not proceed.

The AMA President said the Christmas holiday season, when families typically get together, was a good time to talk about organ donation and make sure people were aware of a donor’s wishes.

“You need to share your decision to become an organ and tissue donor with others, especially family members,” Professor Owler said. “Organ and tissue donation will not proceed against the family’s wishes, so it is vitally important that they are fully informed of your intentions.”

Professor Owler said the festive season can also be a difficult time for the families of donors.

“The holidays can be an extremely stressful and sad time for donor families,” he said. “While they may draw some comfort from knowing their loved one’s organs and tissues are helping many others, many will continue to feel pain and grief for many years.

“On behalf of the AMA and the medical profession, I thank the families who have supported the decision of their loved one to be an organ and tissue donor, and strongly encourage those who have not yet done so to consider becoming one.”

For more information about organ and tissue donation, people can discuss the matter with their family doctor, or visit the Australian Organ and Tissue Authority website at:
<http://www.donatelife.gov.au>.

To register your consent to be an organ donor, visit:

<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/australian-organ-donor-register>

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