

Australian Medical Association Limited

ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



AMA URGES MORE AUSTRALIANS TO REGISTER TO BE ORGAN DONORS

DonateLife Week, 30 July – 6 August 2017

The AMA is urging more Australians to register as organ donors to save lives and improve the quality of life for others.

This week, 30 July – 6 August, is DonateLife Week, the perfect time to raise community awareness about the importance of organ and tissue donation, and becoming a donor.

Led by the Organ and Tissue Authority (OTA), this year's DonateLife Week theme, *Make Your Decision Count*, is all about encouraging more Australians to join the Australian Organ Donor Register.

AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today that the Australian organ and tissue donation rate is improving, but we can need to do a lot better.

In 2015, Australia ranked 20th in the world, with 18.1 donors per million population. Croatia and Spain led the world, with 40.2 donors per million population.

In 2016, the Australian donation rate rose to 20.8, with 503 deceased organ donors donating to 1447 transplant recipients. The 2016 outcomes represent a 16 per cent increase in deceased organ donors and a 17 per cent increase of recipients compared to the previous record high 2015 outcomes.

Dr Gannon said the major catalyst for increasing the rate was conversation and education – within families, within social groups, and in the broader community.

“We have to get people talking more openly about the benefits of organ donation, and their personal wishes to be a donor,” Dr Gannon said.

“People should make their choice regarding organ and tissue donation known to their family members and friends.

“Even if a person has registered as an organ and tissue donor, their family will be asked to confirm their wishes and give their consent.

“If a person is not registered, the family will still be asked to give their consent to donation, but evidence shows a significantly higher family consent rate where a person has registered to become an organ and tissue donor.

Research by the OTA shows that:

- 91 per cent of families agreed to donation when their loved one was a registered donor;
- 71 per cent of families agreed to donation when they knew their loved one’s decision;
- the national average of family agreement to donation is 62 per cent; and
- 52 per cent of families agreed to donate when their loved one had not registered or discussed their donation wishes.

Dr Gannon said that one organ and tissue donor can help more than 10 people by saving a life, improving the quality of life, and restoring bodily function.

“The AMA strongly encourages all individuals to consider becoming an organ donor, discuss their views with their family, and record their wish on the Australian Organ Donor Register.”

For more information about DonateLife Week, and to access the Australian Organ Donor Register, go to <https://register.donatelife.gov.au/>

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CONTACT:	John Flannery	02 6270 5477 / 0419 494 761
	Maria Hawthorne	02 6270 5478 / 0427 209 753

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