



MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Health and Ageing

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Flame of life ignites awareness of organ donation

The government will establish a National Collaborative on Organ and Tissue Donation, based on a successful US model, to raise donation rates. Australians Donate will run the new project. The first step is to identify hospitals that could potentially increase the number of organ donors.

The collaborative aims to recruit hospital staff to participate in workshops that demonstrate the most successful approach to organ donation. The participants will then implement the measures in their hospital. The project will also help hospitals to develop multi-disciplinary teams to improve identification of possible donors. By working more closely together, it is hoped the teams will be able to lift the conversion rate of potential donors to actual donors. The collaborative will complement other government initiatives to support organ donation, costing more than \$9.26 million this financial year.

Australia has one of the highest transplant success rates but one of the lowest donation rates in the developed world. In 2005, there were just 204 deceased donors, from whom 735 people received solid organ transplants. An additional 246 transplants were performed from living donors while 1716 Australians were waiting for organs at the start of this year. Sadly, many die waiting. I hope all families use Australian Organ Donor Awareness Week to discuss their personal wishes on what could be the gift of life.

If more people showed the courage of David Hookes' family, then there would be fewer people on transplant waiting lists. As a cricketer, David Hookes thrilled and entertained millions of people. As an organ donor, David Hookes gave ten people a second chance to lead a longer, healthier life. Thanks to organ donation, some lasting good came from David Hookes' tragic death.

A new symbol of hope for organ and tissue donation, the *Flame of Life*, has also been unveiled today. The flame has now begun a journey around Australia to raise awareness of organ donation and encourage more people to register as organ donors.

At the same time, a new national competition has been launched, inviting high schools, college, TAFE and university students to design a new *Flame of Life* for next year's organ donor week. The winning entries will be announced at the Transplant Games in September 2006 and will be on national display.

For more information call Mr Abbott's office on ph 02 6277 7220.