



**Senator the Hon Fiona Nash
ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR HEALTH**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Living Donors Participate in Australia's First 6-Way Domino Kidney Transplant Exchange

In an Australian first, 12 Australians have today participated in an anonymous live kidney donation and transplantation exchange – the largest group of people to benefit from living donor matches at one time.

Assistant Minister for Health Fiona Nash congratulated participants in the exchange and the donation and transplantation specialists and medical teams involved in this historic Australian milestone in kidney transplantation.

Facilitated through the Organ and Tissue Authority's Australian Paired Kidney Exchange Program (AKX Program), in a paired donor exchange, two or three kidney recipients essentially swap willing donors. While medically eligible to donate, each donor has an incompatible blood type or tissue type to his or her intended recipient.

"I admire the generosity of the individuals involved in this exchange. Donating a kidney to a stranger for the benefit of someone you love is an incredible gift; as is choosing to be an altruistic living donor with no personal connection, as was the case for one participant in this exchange," Minister Nash said.

"This Australian first involved the dedication of more than 80 transplantation surgeons, anaesthetists, theatre nurses, transplant coordinators and other medical professionals across three hospitals in Melbourne, Monash Medical Centre, the Austin Hospital and Royal Melbourne Hospital.

By agreeing to exchange recipients - giving the kidney to an unknown but compatible individual - the donors can provide two or three patients with healthy kidneys where previously no transplant would have been possible.

The AKX Programme uses a computer program to search the entire available database of registered recipient/donor pairs to look for combinations where the donor in an incompatible pair can be matched to a recipient in another pair. In each successful AKX match run, two or more simultaneous transplants can occur by exchanging donors.

Director of the AKX Programme, Dr Paolo Ferrari, said the Programme was delivering good results for people who otherwise would have little chance of receiving a viable transplant.

“Some people enrolled in the AKX Programme have less than a one in a hundred chance of receiving a kidney from a deceased organ donor, due to the difficulty of matching their blood and tissue type profiles,” Dr Ferrari said.

To date, the AKX Programme has facilitated 83 kidney transplants from living donors.

Minister Nash said living donors were supported by the Australian Government’s Leave for Living Organ Donors scheme.

“The Leave for Living Donors Scheme aims to alleviate some of the financial burden for living donors, and support them as they take time off work to recover from surgery,” Minister Nash said.

The pilot scheme allows for up to six weeks payment as a contribution, paid to employers, towards leave expenses at a rate up to the National Minimum Wage.

Living organ donation is major surgery and is not without risk to the donor. Strict medical and legal criteria apply before a living donation can proceed. There must be no evidence of coercion, monetary payment or reward and the donor must have full knowledge of the risks and benefits of the donation.

For more information visit donatelife.gov.au

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