



Connecting Donor Families – May

2013

The launch of Donor Families Australia provides a wonderful opportunity for Donor Families to improve community acceptance of organ and tissue donation.

The generosity of a donor and their loved ones transforms the lives of others, both at the time of the donation decision and long afterwards, because donor families are the best advocates for organ donation.

In my professional life I have been fortunate to have witnessed the courage and kindness of families who have made donation decisions at times of great sorrow. I believe that the members of Donor Families Australia will provide inspiration, advocacy, guidance and care to ensure Australians receive the information and support they require to make donation decisions they never regret.

Many in our community are confused about the process of organ and tissue donation. This organisation will provide opportunities for discussion, education and collaboration about a range of matters that impact on Australian donation practices. One issue identified in a study I am involved in is the need to properly acknowledge tissue as well as organ donor families; their gift is equally extraordinary. If Australia is to achieve equivalence with international best practice it is important to make organ and tissue donation normal. A conversation about donation should be a part of

expert end of life care for every Australian. Knowing our loved ones wishes is just so important, and we wish to honour those wishes; however, many families never have the opportunity to have those wishes properly considered because either donation isn't mentioned or the person conducting the conversation at the time of death lacks the knowledge and skill to support the families with those decisions.

Thank you to the founding donor families and especially Bruce, Leanne, Philippa, Graham and their families for the honour of allowing me to contribute to Donor Families Australia. I wish the warmth of friendship, the strength of wisdom, and the rewards of generosity to all those who are touched by this organisation. The benefits gained by our society from your decisions are incalculable, but include leadership, selflessness and charity in caring for those in need.

Holly Northam is Assistant Professor in Critical Care Nursing at the University of Canberra. She is a Registered Nurse, Midwife and doctoral candidate exploring the experiences of families who have made organ donation decisions. Amongst her previous clinical roles Holly was an organ donor coordinator. Holly is a Director on the Board of Sharelife Australia.

