



DONOR FAMILIES AUSTRALIA

AGM 20<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

**2020/2021**

It has been a year of many achievements and it gives me great pleasure to be able to present them here tonight. Over the last financial year Donor Families Australia (DFA) has been instrumental in advocating, supporting, and raising awareness for all in the donation and wider community.

Our DFA community continues to grow, at 30/6/20 we had 782 registered families, as at 30/6/21 we had 904 registered families, an increase of 16%. The fact that membership continues to grow shows the need for our organisation.

The flow on effect of the previous year's conference continues. It was from the conference that Tara Cheyne's Acknowledgement of Donation on the Death Certificate was born. To Tara's credit her new ACT legislation was enacted in this year. Donor Families in the ACT can now present to their Birth, Death and Marriage Government Department to have their loved one's Death Certificate amended to acknowledge that they were a donor. What a wonderful achievement by Tara, especially in COVID 19 times, and a great way to help honour our loved one's selfless gift to those in need of organs and tissues.

The conference also highlighted the importance of letter exchange between Donor Families and Recipients. This year saw DFA take its role to a new level in advising on how this process should be managed. Members have made it clear to DFA that there were many flaws in how letters are handled. This was made glaringly obvious when 69 letters were left unsorted in the Donate Life office in Sydney. What followed this occurrence was a first, where the Organ and Tissue Authority (OTA) consulted with DFA on how its letter writing procedures should be improved. Members will be aware of the information and requests for ideas from the committee to help put together our recommendations for improvements. Over the course of working with the OTA we were satisfied that in principle the measures implemented from our engagement would help all Donor Families and Recipients.

The only recommendation that DFA presented that was not taken up was that of first names of the Donor being allowed in the Donor Families letter. It was explained by the OTA to DFA that this would contravene legislation around the country and potentially place health workers in a position of being fined and or face a penalty. DFA took this information from the OTA and decided to test its correctness by way of seeking legal advice. This advice was sought from Lavan Legal in Perth WA. DFA requested Lavan test this advice against the Human Tissue Act of WA. DFA is still going through the advice as this report is being written, but it would be fair to say it is a revelation and throws into question what this legislation specifically means and how it affects Donor Families, Recipients and government department practices. We have taken this advice to politicians and public servants and will keep the membership informed of how this advice plays out in the future.

My Chairman's Report from last year mentioned Recommendation 26 (**States and territories establish a nationally uniform process for arrangements for donor families and recipients over the age of 18 to be identified to each other based on the principle of mutual informed consent**) from the Ernst and Young review and that it would be brought before a National Body. Unfortunately, this still has not happened. DFA continues to lobby in this area and hopes that a positive outcome for Donor Families and Recipients will eventuate. We will let the membership know of any updates.

DFA conducted its second Donor Heroes Night in May this year. This event grew enormously by comparison to its first year. Through the efforts of Graham and Elayne Harrison, in honour of their son Ben and all Donors, this year's effort had a final reach of over a million people. Graham and Elayne put together a very professional media campaign that culminated in porch lights being turned on. The night of the 18/5/21 was a very memorable evening. DFA did apply for an OTA grant for this event but amazingly it was rejected on the basis it did not meet the criteria of raising awareness.

This year saw our single biggest fund-raising event. The Kurri Mongrels, an organisation of cyclists from the Newcastle area in NSW, took on DFA as its charity for the year. Despite COVID 19 restrictions it still managed to conduct cycling events through the local area raising awareness along the way. A major ebike raffle was conducted by the Mongrels that raised over \$17,000. A big thank you to Jann and Billie Eastley for their efforts in getting this off the ground. For the second time Pfizer has been kind enough to include DFA in its grant allocations with a \$2,000 payment. Well done to Philippa Delahoy for her efforts in making this happen. DFA is a Charitable organisation that relies on the generosity of the community to support our objectives. We will continue to look at new avenues of sponsorship.

This year saw some major IT and social media improvements through the efforts of Graham Harrison, Nathan Gale and Samatha Howkins. The Donor Family Australia public facebook page has 2,295 followers. The DFA web page had new unique visitors this year of 1,853. The largest activity was over our Donor Hero Night. Our data base collection system has had a huge revamp that now allows quick reference to our membership per state and territory. We would like to thank the members for their response to our recent data survey.

Again, DFA has been very active in representing its members with bi monthly meetings with the OTA and being part of the OTA's Community Engagement Group. Committee members are constantly attending meetings outside of the monthly DFA meeting with politicians, public servants and community members to advocate on behalf of its membership.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the outgoing committee members, Philippa Waldron and Nathan Gale. Philippa has been a member of the committee since its inception in early 2013. Philippa has done a great job in sending out the anniversary remembrance emails to all Donor Families. I know this service is greatly appreciated by the membership. Philippa receives a lot of thankyou's around the country for what she does. The good news is that even though Phillipa will no longer be a committee member she has agreed to continue in this role of sending out anniversary remembrance emails to our membership. A big thankyou also to Nathan. Nathan has helped bring us into the current world of social media. Many of our social media posts are generated by Nathan. Similarly, to Philippa, Nathan as a non-committee member will continue to do those postings into the future.

I would also like to thank all the committee members for the work done in the last year. Every year has its new challenges, and the committee took them on and have achieved great things in the name of our members. I would also like to formally welcome our newly elected committee members who

I'm sure will bring with them valuable experience to their new role. I look forward to what DFA will be doing next year and into the future to assist Donor Families.

Bruce McDowell

Chairman

20/10/21