



MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

Where is the Family in “Making Your Decision Count”?

As DonateLife commences this Sunday 30 July, Donor Families Australia (DFA) highlights its concern with the new registration system that has been put in place to coincide with the Australian Government’s national reform program, effectively removing the importance of the family in the organ and tissue donation registration process.

Previously, it was seen as just as important to talk with your family to have them understand your wishes. Despite what the community is led to believe, international comparison shows that registration alone does not improve donor rates. Dr Holly Northam from Donor Families Australia says: “You cannot get a clearer idea what your loved one wants than to have that conversation with them. The fact they have registered is only part of the story; the conversation is the whole story.”

There is also concern that the registration form itself does not adequately cover what potential donors (and by extension, their families) are signing up for.

Donor Families Australia Chair, Bruce McDowell, a Donor Father himself, says that whilst DFA certainly applauds the Federal Government for now making it easier to register, it is vital that you read the fine print and know what you are registering for.

“A comment made at a recent forum was that with donor rates expected to improve markedly from the new system, there would be, for example, so many additional eyes available that Australia could 'export' them. Some community members may certainly have no issue with that but it would surely be important to know this was a possibility when completing a registration, he said.

Furthermore, the Organ and Tissue Authority Board no longer includes any Donor Family representation.

“For the first time since 2008, there will not be any direct Donor Family representation to the OTA. Donor Families, representing other Donor Families, will not have any direct way of being part of policy making within the system. This trend of diminishing Donor Family involvement is a concern,” said Mr McDowell.

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