

WORLD DONOR HEROES' NIGHT

Sunday 18th May 2025

Media Information Sheet



Donor Families Australia (DFA) welcomes the Media in supporting and celebrating World Donor Heroes' Night with Donor Families, Recipients, and the Australian and overseas communities.

World Donor Heroes' Night allows Donor Families to commemorate their donor loved one, recipients to thank their donor family and the community to acknowledge those that decided to be an organ/tissue donor. This year however DFA has extended the events name to World Donor Heroes' Night after last year saw an increased interest from overseas organisations and agencies. They included America, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Europe and India.

DFA has long recognised that organ and tissue donors are our HEROES within the organ/tissue and transplantation area, having enabled the saving or greatly improving the lives of tens of thousands of Aussies over the past 35 plus years.

The Event this year is seeking to raise community awareness around the World and acknowledge the important role that Donors Families provide, in the ongoing improvement ensuring Best Practice and Marketing of organ/tissue donation.

Following the nation's highest yearly donation rate of 554 donors in 2018, sadly after the Covid year our donation rate still remains below this rate. 2024 statistics located on the DonateLife website at <https://www.donatelife.gov.au/all-about-donation/statistics-in-australia#Latest-stat> state the following:

“Within Australia **1,800** patients are currently waitlisted for an organ transplant, and an additional **14,000** people are on dialysis – some of whom may/will need a kidney transplant one day. In 2024, there were **527** donors resulting **1,328** recipients, **253** living kidney donors, more than **2,630** people have their eyesight restored through a corneal transplant, and **8,192** people received tissue (e.g., musculoskeletal, heart, skin from both deceased and living donors) transplants – all thanks to the life-changing gift of donation.”

DFA believes the causes are:

- Those wishing to be a donor following their passing need to have this conversation with their family,
- The family need to educate themselves as to what the organ & retrieval process involves for them - (<https://www.donatelife.gov.au/all-about-donation>),
- The management and support of donor families need to be consistent across all retrieval hospitals,

- Communication post retrieval between donor families and their recipients and their family members need to be managed seamlessly,
- There needs to be a strong rapport between the Organ & Tissue Authority and the peak Donor Family body (Donor Families Australia) which does not currently exist.
- While the Australian Organ Donor Register is recognised as a helpful management tool, it should not supersede the issues identified above,
- The Human Tissue Act as it currently stands has a strong bias towards the medical community with little or no involvement of donor families nationally.

Who is Donor Families Australia?

Donor Families Australia is a national member-based independent support and advocacy group comprising primarily of families who have donated their loved ones' organs and tissue. DFA's manifesto is to; **Care** and support donor families, **Advocate** by providing a voice for donor families where change is required, **Educate** the wider community of the benefits of organ and tissue donation, and **Share** our own experiences within our membership. It's the only organisation of its kind in Australia specifically dedicated to supporting Donor Families. DFA was established in late 2012 and its membership has recently exceeded over 1,000 with over 3,000 followers on our Facebook page. DFA also produces a quarterly newsletter with a projected circulation of 6,000. Further detailed information can be found at <https://www.donorfamiliesaustralia.org/>

What is World Donor Heroes' Night about and its History?

World Donor Heroes' Night is a dedicated event which celebrates, honours, and commemorates the men, women and children of Australia who have given the gift of life through organ and tissue donation.

2020 May, the inaugural Donor Heroes Night was undertaken. The event was inspired by thousands of Aussies commemorating ANZAC day when they came out of their homes in the early morning to remember our ANZAC Heroes, light a candle or played the last post in their memory. So why couldn't the same be done to acknowledge and celebrate the approximate **25,000 Australian Donor Heroes** who have given themselves to save or benefit others during the past 37 years. DFA recognises all organ and tissue donors as well as living donors drawing on data provided from DonateLife and ANZDATA.

2020: resulted in 50,000 Australians through the various social media platforms being involved.

2021: saw this number rise to 125,000 that were involved in the weeks leading up to and including the night of the 18th May 2021.

2022: resulted in involving a total of 260,127 Facebook "Reaches, Likes, Engagements, Comments and Shared postings" which exceeded our original goal of 250,000. The event for the first time reached out to several overseas organisations and it is hoped

that this international exposure will continue to grow. On the evening of 18th May 30,623 actions on Facebook involving posting photos of their light/candle and Donor Hero loved one accompanied by comments supported by family, friends, and the community at large occurred.

2023: was equally as successful as that of 2022, as DFA reached out to Australians Federal Politicians resulting in approximately 20 from all sides of politics supporting the Event.

2024: saw DFA conducted its fifth Donor Hero Night in May. The major focus was to help raise awareness of the importance of organ and tissue donation whilst honouring the donor. It was encouraging to see such a large number of organ/tissue donation and transplantation organisations get involved, and for the first time it was encouraging that those group from overseas were interested in what was being done. Overall, 21 organisations were engaged: 10 from Australia, 6 from Canada, 5 from United Kingdom and 2 from Europe. It is even more incredible when one realises that a total of 186,888 followers had the potential to participate. The power of social media services across the platforms involving; Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter) and YouTube during the six weeks of marketing leading up to and including the evening Event, amounted to over 42,500 known hits recorded.

The evening Event itself achieved; 26,005 Reaches 3,780 Likes, 469 Comments, 323 Photos and 1,116 Shares amounting to a total of 31,693 hits. This outcome acknowledges how important it is to enable those involved in Organ/Tissue donation the ability to honour our Donor Heroes. Once the event has concluded several days after, taking time to view the photos and read the comments is very moving.

Who are our Donor Heroes?

Donor Heroes are people from all walks of life who have donated their organs and/or tissues or are living donors (kidney & liver) so that others may live or have an improved life.

In Australia we honour the lives of many thousands of donor heroes who have given the gift of life and or improved life to others. They're our brothers, sisters, parents, friends and children.

You can find a list of [Donor Heroes](#) and [their stories](#) on the Donor Families Australia website at <https://www.donorfamiliesaustralia.org/our-heroes> .

All Donor Families Worldwide are invited to post a photo of their Donor Hero on the Australian Virtual Donor Hero Wall at

<https://www.donorfamiliesaustralia.org/the-virtual-donor-wall>



Who and how can the community take part in Donor Heroes' Night?

Leave a Light or equivalent for all our Donor Heroes

- if you are a donor family member,
- if your mate was a donor hero,
- if you know of a donor hero,
- if you are a recipient,
- if you are a recipient family member,
- if you are in need of a transplant,
- if you have signed the National Organ/Tissue Donor Register,
- if you support Organ/Tissue Donation,

Take a photo of your porch light or candle and upload it onto our DFA's Facebook Page at facebook.com/DonorFamiliesAustralia together with your comment. Donor Families are also encouraged to also post a photo of your Donor Hero if you wish. You may also wish to post on your own Facebook Page, Instagram or Twitter account which can help highlight Donor Heroes' Night.

How to go about posting my photo?

Once your photo has been taken on your phone, undertake the following steps:

- Download the photo onto your computer (not required if you are posting from your phone,
- Go to the DFA's Facebook Page within Facebook and enter Donor Families Australia within the Search field or enter the following link within your Internet header
www.facebook.com/DonorFamiliesAustralia and press return

DFA's Facebook head is as follows



- Scroll to the Post Heading “Donor Heroes’ Night”



- Click on “Comment” to initiate your donor hero post, then click on the camera icon to add your photo.
- To add an additional photo e.g. your donor hero loved one, under your own post, click on reply to add your own personal photo.


- Samples of previous posts from past years are displayed over page


Samples from DHN





 **Rebecca Louise Free**
My light shines bright for my beautiful Mum Maureen, who gave the gift of life to five others on 4.3.2010. We love you so much Mum and miss you each and every day xxx





Love Reply Hide 41w    14





 **Author**
Donor Families Australia
Donor Families Australia has always believed that our loved ones are Donor Heroes within the Organ and Transplant System. Ben has been my Donor Hero on this night for the past 29 years having saved the life of a middle aged gentleman and a 12 year old girl at the time. On behalf of all Donor Families I say "Our Donor Heroes will never be forgotten". Donor Heroes Night is for you Ben and the approximate 25,000 organ and tissue donor that have given the "Gift of Life" over the past 40 years.



Love Reply Commented on by **Graham Harrison**  41w    24

 **Author**
Donor Families Australia
My Donor Hero, my mate, missing you - Mum and Dad



Like Reply Commented on by **Graham Harrison**  41w    17



Robyn McCanna

My porch lights are on shining pink in loving memory of our beautiful daughter/sister/sister in law & Aunt Sally McCanna who gave the gifts of her heart, kidneys, pancreas & liver on the 12th May 2014 ❤️❤️
Also remembering Lui Polimeni, Julia Kovacs, Bill Spencer, Harry Laurie & Andrea Dotta, all beautiful hero's who gave the ultimate gift when they couldn't stay xxxx



Love Reply Hide 41w



Robyn McCanna

Steven & Maria honouring his sister & SIL with their pink porch light. My beautiful grandchildren Lucas, Sally & Ava showing their love & support of their angel Aunty Sally McCanna ❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️



Love Reply Hide 41w



Janelle Colquhoun

Tonight, on Donor Heroes' Night, I'm commemorating the living and deceased people who have saved so many lives by donating organ and tissue. I've lit a candle in honour of my anonymous donor hero, who was 27 when she passed away, but has given me so far an additional 14 years of life. Thank-you to my Donor Hero for this incredible gift, and to her amazing family who made the decision to donate at such a terrible time in their lives.



Love Reply Hide 41w





Top fan

Dave Reynolds

Neralie put the extra in extraordinary in everything she did ❤️ To live life is to love I will always be indebted to you Ner. An Angel From Heaven Just On Loan ❤️❤️



Love Reply Hide 41w

23



Author

Donor Families Australia

Dave Reynolds too beautiful and too young to be a Donor Hero Dave.

Like Reply Commented on by Graham Harrison 41w

4



Top fan

Dave Reynolds

Donor Families Australia I believe all the Donors are true HEROS and all beautiful in their own way. They shall all live on forever in a special way 🙏

Like Reply Hide 41w

3



Reply to Donor Families Australia...



Top fan

Dave Reynolds



Like Reply Hide 41w

3



Top fan

Dave Reynolds

Media Enquiries

The following DFA members can provide information arrange interviews at a local level.



Bruce McDowell (WA) Chairman of Donor Families Australia
0427 645 262 mcdowellbj08@gmail.com

I live in Perth WA with my wife Karen whilst previously residing in Geraldton for the past 30 years, raising our family of 3 children. After our 19 year old daughter Alysha passed away in 2008, I became a Donor Dad. I could not be prouder of Alysha for becoming a Donor Hero. At the time of becoming a Donor Family there was no organisation that supported and or advocated for Donor Families. With liked minded families Donor Families Australia was established in 2013. Bruce is the DFA Chair and State rep. It is very pleasing to see this group grow from strength to strength.



Leanne Campbell (Vic) Deputy-Chair of Donor Families Australia
0422 123 014 ricklean@tpg.co.au

We lost our twenty-year-old son, Brett, in December 2009, and became a donor family. Whilst he was not a registered organ donor, we chose to uphold his decision to give the gift of life. Lack of support during and after our donation experience compelled me to speak up for positive change. The need to be supported by others who had walked this journey and who could truly understand how we felt was imperative. I would like to see an end to the bureaucratic approach to policy and decision making. We need a system that places those most affected (donors, recipients, donor's and recipient's families) first, ahead of the emphasis on the organ and tissue register. I believe funds could be much better spent whilst still achieving increased donations rates. The concerns in regard to the letter writing process need addressing now. Consenting donor families and recipients should be able to meet should they wish and be supported through this process.



Graham Harrison (NSW) Coordinator, Donor Heroes Night
0421 697 048 gharrison1953@gmail.com

Graham is a founding member of Donor Families Australia and with the support of his wife Elayne been heavily involved in supporting organ and tissue donation and providing support and advocacy for Donor Families, following the death of his 10 year old son and the donation of his organs in May 1993. Graham went onto be involved in ABC Australian Story, Sixty Minutes, Transplant Australia, ShareLife and Donor Families Australia. It was Graham that has conceived the concept of Donor Heroes Night after observing how the public became involved in ANZAC Day during the Covid pandemic.

State/Territory Contacts

- ACT Barry Mewett** 0408 024 110 barry.mewett@bigpond.com
Barry is a Territory rep. and an active Donor Partner following the passing of his wife Jean in 2005
- Dr Holly Northam OAM** 0412 289 295 holly.northam@canberra.edu.au
Holly is a Territory rep. provides donation and transplantation ethical guidance drawing on her medical doctorate and experience as a RN & RM.
- NSW Philippa Delahoy** philippa.delahoy@pfizer.com
Philippa the DFA Secretary and State rep. and a Donor Partner following the passing of her husband Scott in 2011. Philippa has been involved in media presentations.
- Graham Harrison** 0421 697 048 gharrison1953@gmail.com (as above)
Graham is a State rep. and a Donor dad following the death of his son Ben in 1993. Graham has been involved in media presentations.
- SA Jackie Robson** 0418 369 741 jackie.robson@hotmail.com
Jackie is a State rep. and a Donor Partner following her husband's sudden passing in 2016
- VIC Leanne Campbell** 0422 123 014 leannercampbell@gmail.com
Leanne is Deputy Chair/State rep. and a Donor Parent to her son Brett following his death in 2009.
- WA Bruce McDowell** 0427 645 262 mcdowellbj08@gmail.com
Bruce is the DFA Chair and State rep. following the death of his daughter Alysha in 2008. Bruce has been involved in media presentations.

Recipient Rep

Darryn Willson 0480 899 570 darrynww1@gmail.com
Recipient Rep & Media Release Contact

Additional References

DFA Website; <https://www.donorfamiliesaustralia.org/>

DFA Donor Heroes' Night; <https://www.donorfamiliesaustralia.org/donor-heroes-night>

DFA Website Virtual Donor Heroes' Wall; <https://www.donorfamiliesaustralia.org/the-virtual-donor-wall>

DFA Facebook Event Page; <https://www.facebook.com/DonorFamiliesAustralia>

DFA Instagram; [donor_families_australia](#)

DFA Twitter; [@donor_families](#)