

DonateLife  
BOOK OF  
LIFE

A collection of life-saving and life-changing stories from people touched by **organ and tissue donation.**







Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC  
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

*Foreword to the DonateLife Book of Life*

by Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, AC  
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

---

As the inaugural DonateLife Ambassador, I have been privileged to observe the impressive leadership of the DonateLife team and agency network in managing organ and tissue donations throughout the country, and in educating Australians about the issues that are central to our decisions to give life.

Inspired by the work of these outstanding professionals, the *DonateLife Book of Life* is a heartfelt appeal to all Australians urging us to find out the facts about organ and tissue donation, to make well informed decisions, and to discuss those decisions with the people close to us.

Here is a collection of stories from brave and thoughtful Australians whose lives have been touched and transformed by a donor's life-affirming decision. These honest and grateful accounts pay tribute to the generosity of lives tragically and abruptly ended: the ultimate act of giving life to another as one's own life passes.

The *DonateLife Book of Life* starts its journey around Australia in DonateLife Week, Sunday 20 to Sunday 27 February 2011, a campaign led by the Australian Government's Organ and Tissue Authority to raise donation awareness among Australians and to increase our donation rates.

It is my hope in 2011 that, as these stories are shared across the nation, many more of us will be moved to think, talk and act on a decision that can help bring life and healing to thousands of Australian lives.

This is a decision for all of us and each of us. We share life and we share a capacity to give life. Our personal experiences of living and giving are most powerfully told through our stories. This book is our carriage and our conduit for ensuring that our decisions bring the greatest good to the greatest number in the Australian community.

We are forever indebted to those Australians who have chosen to give life. They have made their mark in the most profound ways and the *DonateLife Book of Life* bears their courageous stamp.

May these pages travel far and deep across our generous land.

6 February

GOVERNMENT HOUSE CANBERRA ACT 2600 AUSTRALIA

TELEPHONE +61(2) 6283 3525 FACSIMILE +61(2) 6283 3595

2011

**Discover the facts**  
**Decide about becoming**  
**an organ and tissue donor and**  
**Discuss your decision with**  
**the people close to you.**



# A good luck story

**M**y husband John had kidney disease, but he was lucky to be diagnosed long before 'end stage'. At 55 years old, John had 35 percent kidney function, and it was declining.

Luckily, we have an excellent local renal specialist. John was committed to following instructions and adapting to the ever diminishing dietary choices. He continued farming, surfing, refereeing rugby and going to the gym. Despite the expertise of the nephrologist and John's determination, it was hard watching his inevitable loss of energy, and the resulting shrinking of John's world, as one by one he was unable to continue doing the things he loved, and eating the things he loved to eat.

Luckily, when we started looking for a live donor, I was the first person tested—and I was a match! It was like an early Christmas present.

Making the decision to donate a kidney was easy. The hardest part of the process was waiting for the final decision to go ahead and use my kidney. In the second cross match

some problems were discovered. The final delay, though, was because of the transplant team's great care for the health of the donors. I had to have extra tests to make sure that my health wasn't compromised by the operation. At all times I had ready access to support and information, and being a donor gave me a chance to feel really involved in John's recovery.

Many people feel that giving a piece of yourself away is daunting. I had no reservations. I have always regarded my physical body as machinery; not part of the intrinsic psychological, spiritual and intellectual 'Me'. I have only ever had positive experiences in hospital and the wonderful care and counselling of the transplant team and hospital staff made my operation another life adventure.

Luckily, John and I now have a whole new life of adventures ahead of us.

Luckily, we live in Australia, where all this is possible.

Shirley



Shirley and John

**Any day is a good day  
to talk about organ  
and tissue donation.**



# Zaidee's story & Zaidee's rainbow shoelaces

**O**ur daughter Zaidee Rose Alexander, aged seven years and 22 days died suddenly from a burst blood vessel in her brain called a Cerebral Aneurism.

Zaidee raced out of her bedroom after going to bed that night about 9pm and yelled, 'I have a pain in my head'. Zaidee then collapsed unconscious in her mum's arms, we rushed Zaidee to the hospital in Shepparton where they did an MRI scan which discovered a large bleed in her brain. They then called for the air ambulance to rush Zaidee to the Royal Children's Hospital for emergency brain surgery. After the operation they sat Kim and I down and explained that Zaidee was brain dead and there was no hope that she would live as the bleed was too severe.

It was at that moment that Kim turned to the hospital staff and said she was going to donate Zaidee's organs and tissues. Hours later Zaidee was taken in for her final operation to become a donor. All the staff in the ICU just stood and watched as she was wheeled into surgery, as many at this hospital had never seen a child become a donor before— especially the new nurses.

When Zaidee was just six and a half years of age she turned to Kim and said, 'If anything happens to me I want to donate to other kids'.

Who would have thought just seven months later she would die and become a donor. Zaidee was the only child in our state, under the age of 16 years, to donate that year.

Zaidee's Rainbow Shoelaces have now become one of the national symbols to create national awareness for this subject and also for the public to reflect their support through wearing them.

Seven people benefited from Zaidee's gift of life.

**Allan and Kim**



Zaidee

**Australia is a world  
leader for successful  
transplant outcomes.**





# Jennie

**I became ill and after many tests I was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit. I had a nine hour liver transplant three weeks later.**

My new liver 'kicked' in straight away and started clearing out my brain of the toxins and three days later my head had cleared. I could think and read and said to my daughter, 'My head has cleared, I'm back on the planet and I'm starving!'. It was a wonderful and unbelievable feeling.

After a total of three months, I was allowed to go home to Mount Gambier and driving from Keith down to the Mount (two hours), I saw three rainbows and I just knew that I was OK—it was a good omen. I went back to playing social tennis after four months, then part-time work at five months.

I heard about the Transplant Games whilst in hospital. My first Games were the Australian Games in Adelaide in 1996 and I won two Gold and one Silver—and I was hooked! I have competed in the World Games in Sydney; then Budapest; Kobe, Japan; Nancy, France; Bangkok, Thailand; Gold Coast, Australia—winning altogether nine Gold, three Silver and three Bronze. I hold World, Australian and British record times for 100m and 200m in my age group. I have competed in Adelaide, Ballarat, Wollongong, Gold Coast and Canberra Australian Games.

In 16 wonderful years I have travelled the world to compete in the World Transplant Games and also fulfilled the dreams whilst lying in a hospital bed with only five-six days to live before my transplant.

I will be forever grateful to my donor family for saying 'yes' to their loved one's organs being donated and for me to be able to receive a second chance at life. I have literally 'run for life' ever since.

I also thank my husband, family and friends for supporting me through the journey—which has been their journey too.

Jennie



Jennie winning the 100m in 60+ age group

Do you know the  
donation decision  
of your loved ones?



# The best gift

**M**y dad was diagnosed with hereditary kidney disease when I was two years old. He was very sick my whole life. He was on dialysis and often rushed to hospital in the middle of the night. He eventually had to resign from work and we were struggling financially. My pop (Dad's dad) who was in his 70's, didn't realise he could be a donor. He gave Dad a kidney! Dad had been on the transplant waiting list for years though. Not good enough!

When I was 21, I was diagnosed with the same hereditary condition as Dad and the specialists have said in the future I will need a kidney

transplant. I am really passionate about organ donation, and would love to offer my time to help.

Obviously, I can't donate my kidneys because they are dodgy, but everything else is free to a good home when I go!

I believe organ donation is the best gift you will ever give and never know you gave!

Thanks for promoting awareness and educating people. All my support.

Ramona



**Discover the facts**  
**Decide about becoming**  
**an organ and tissue donor and**  
**Discuss your decision with**  
**the people close to you.**



# One good turn deserves another

**B**rett was the recipient of two corneal transplants and was adamant that should something happen to him 'they can take what ever they want'. It was noted on his driver's licence and something that he was passionate about. Never did I think I would need this information.

Then out of the blue Brett was admitted to hospital with severe headaches and nausea. Within an hour he was in a coma. The following morning I gave permission for a scan as I was preparing our children for their day in school and child care. Later that afternoon I was informed that Brett had a brain tumor and was going to Adelaide for treatment. Still later that day I was told he was 'brain dead' and that all intensive care machines would be turned off.

I then enquired about him wanting to be an organ donor. The hospital staff were amazing and the process was put in place. A team came up from Adelaide to retrieve the organs. This process gave us an additional 36 hours to say goodbye to my husband and the father to our two wonderful children.

Soon after we received a letter to advise us that Brett's organs had helped five people. We were pleased that his wishes had been carried out and pleased that the process was successful. Happy that something had come out of our sudden and very sad loss.

I still miss my husband after many years, though I know he made the right decision and I am pleased we could carry out his wishes.



Brett, father of three

**Start the organ  
and tissue donation  
discussion today**



# Delivered by an angel

**T**im's diagnosis with terminal cancer three years ago did not alter his decision to be an organ donor. He used this decision as a way of dealing with his cancer, by way of focusing on others, rather than himself. Unfortunately a year before Tim passed away from cancer he learnt that his decision to be an organ donor would not be acted upon. It was a shock to him as he thought it would be a decision that would never be questioned, as it was something he so strongly believed in. This was a big blow to him and caused him great disappointment. He handled this with eventual resolve, and continued living his life believing that the door of organ donation was closed.

The morning after Tim passed away I received a phone call from the coordinator of the eye bank at the Flinders Medical Centre, asking for my permission for Tim's corneas to be used as transplants. Although I had little sleep, and a very short time frame in which to make this decision, the choice was clear. I knew how much organ donation meant to Tim and I had comfort given to me by an embroidered angel on Tim's quilt when he died.

Tim was at peace with his angel, and I was at peace knowing Tim's wish was fulfilled. I felt as though I was giving him a gift by agreeing to

the tissue donation, which was not mentioned to us when Tim was alive.

On the afternoon of Tim's funeral we received a phone call from the eye bank coordinator advising us that Tim's corneas had been transplanted to two people. Just as Tim was delivered by an angel, the two people were delivered the gift of sight by an angel.



Tim

**If you want to donate life,  
discuss it today, OK?**





# One chance. One life.

**Ashley. A remarkable young man, a larrikin, a devoted family guy and a true hero.**

Ashley was 27 years of age and experiencing one of the greatest peaks of his life, attending the Clipsal 500 race meeting in Adelaide driving his very own V8 Supercar. A dream come true.

But in a devastating accident on the track, Ashley's race and life was cut short.

Ashley had lived his life to its utmost potential. He crammed so many outstanding experiences into his 27 years; almost as though he knew he had just that one short chance, one life.

Ashley grew up in a small town, surrounding himself with noble people, who shared his keenness for life. He had a mischievous humour and a smirk that brought delight to the lives of all he met. But for every part cheeky, he had equal parts genuine compassion and respect. A true gentleman and a true larrikin. Ashley was an incredible son, brother, partner, father and mate.

Following his accident and death, true to his giving and generous nature, he was able to give one final, ultimate gift. He was able to donate life. Ashley was a multiorgan donor and directly touched the lives of six people with his gift. Thankfully as a family we had discussed organ and tissue donation and knew what Ashley's wishes were and, that if given the chance, he wanted to donate life. His death was a tragedy that we didn't see coming and we can't imagine having made the decision to donate without knowing his wishes. We share Ashley's story when we can and always encourage families to discuss donation so they know the wishes of their loved ones. For Ashley to be a donor was a true blessing to our family.

Ash didn't have a second chance at life, of course we – his family – wish he had, but he did make the most of the chance he had, he lived a beautiful life and made us all so proud, he was the rock our family revolved around. His gift gave his donor recipients the chance to live their lives and share their futures with their families and loved ones. They had already battled through sickness and now Ashley's gift has given them a chance that they each deserve. We think about the recipients often and wish them all a magnificent future.

Ashley will always be sincerely missed, it's hard to make sense of losing such a precious person from our world. But .... he will always be remembered for his life, his love, and his gift – one chance, one life.

## Ashley's family



Ashley. His gift saved six lives—his love and smile touched many.

Do you know the  
donation decision  
of your loved ones?



# A long road with a happy ending

**I don't remember a time when I wasn't sick. Being born with cystic fibrosis meant managing a long-term illness became a way of life.**

I had spent my whole life in and out of hospital. At 25 I was so ill I had to stop working and my life became two weeks in hospital, one week out.

All the things people take for granted I couldn't do. You lose your independence, your self esteem and the things that make all the difference.

For the next seven years my life was completely on hold. I struggled with everyday tasks and used to look forward to making it to the end of the day.

I went on the transplant waiting list in 2000. Waiting for a transplant is a strange feeling. Not knowing what will happen, what the outcome will be, but hoping things will be different.

While I was waiting, my lungs started bleeding as a result of my condition and my lung capacity dropped to only 10 per cent.

My wife, Leila, can still remember walking into my room as I was holding a one litre bowl half full of blood and there was another full one on the shelf next to me.

I was airlifted to the Alfred Hospital where I underwent a procedure to try and plug the vessel which was bleeding. When I returned home, the doctors couldn't believe I had survived. Then my transplant arrived.

After the transplant, I almost had to learn to breathe again. I started crying because of the thoughts and feelings going through my head—the amazement, you just can't explain it.

Every year I celebrate my transplant. I am so grateful to be alive and 13 weeks ago I became the proud father of a baby boy.

I never thought I'd see the day I would get married or have a child. I never thought that would happen to me.

My illness has been a roller coaster ride and there have been some hiccups after transplant, but the positives have far outweighed the negatives.

I am now back at work, have learnt to play the guitar and have been able to travel with Leila.

You can't put a price on what you've been given. I think about the donor everyday.

Tom



Tom with his new son, Isaac

**The majority of  
Australians support  
organ and tissue donation.**



# One man and his bike!

**K**eith, a 74 year old former carpenter from the Perth northern suburb of Kingsley in WA has been a very active promoter of organ and tissue donation. For the last 15 months Keith has been an avid supporter, having given out 47,000 Australian Organ Donor Register brochures.

Two years ago a friend of Keith's, waiting for a lung transplant, drew his attention to the cause. He and his wife Barbara initially started helping their friend promote organ and tissue donation by taking registration brochures to their local chemist, doctor's surgeries and health shops. Unfortunately they discovered that people weren't taking any of the brochures and realised more had to be done.

Keith took it upon himself to deliver the registration brochures to the letterboxes in his area, his local football club, eventuating with Keith being physically present at the metro Perth Train Station circuit.

Currently, Keith promotes organ and tissue donation by being present at the Perth Train station, Underground and the Esplanade stations. He catches the 5.15am train to be in the Perth CBD to reach the early morning commuters. He simply stands there and offers the brochures to anyone who would like one. Some people have even returned to get more for their family or colleagues. He regularly plays music and is accompanied by his pink motorised bicycle which has informally become known as the DonateLife bicycle!

Keith enjoys promoting the cause and finds it very positive and has a lot of fun doing it. He has been praised many times for his volunteer work by transplant recipients and strangers and has received many hugs along the way. Keith hopes to be doing this as long as he can.



Keith

**Around 1600 people  
are on official transplant  
waiting lists at any one time**



# I didn't give you life but I can give it back to you

**A**ge 33 I started getting headaches. Not ordinary headaches, the kind that stops you from undertaking your everyday tasks. After seeing a succession of doctors, I never suspected the diagnosis that lie ahead.

I'd lost 85% of my kidneys to the disease known as the 'silent killer'. I was advised to go to hospital. That week I heard many frightening words; chemotherapy, potentially sterile, steroid treatment, dialysis, transplant.

My stepfather Pete said with a quietly determined look on his face, 'I'm sure we have the same blood type; I'm going to give you mine'. He said to Mum, I didn't give her life, but I can give it back to her.

I dealt with my diagnosis with a trip to the USA to realise my lifelong dream of seeing Dolly Parton. My sister, partner in crime and best friend came along. I didn't know what my future held and the doctors advised against it, but I was determined to go and needed the distraction.

Whilst away I got sick and was hospitalised for six weeks. Testing for a donor match takes six months and Pete was passing all the tests.

The transplant was performed within a day or two of needing dialysis. We broke a record. The fastest transplant performed to date at

that hospital. My kidney levels came down at a screaming pace. The doctors jokingly pointed out that I was going to run out of creatinine and I responded with even Pete's organs are over achievers.

I have renewed health and my quality of life is restored. Pete still down plays the whole thing. I'm still in shock and awe over the magnitude of what he did and there are no words to convey my gratitude. It scares me to think I would still be on that long waiting list.

Recently at a wedding my uncle joked that 'Pete, such a generous man, he'll even give away his kidney!'

There are no words for me to convey my eternal gratitude.

Rachel



Peter—In the business of saving lives

**Discover the facts**  
**Decide about becoming**  
**an organ and tissue donor and**  
**Discuss your decision with**  
**the people close to you.**





# Dialysis dreaming

**I am on dialysis every second day at home, totally dependent on my wife and kids (11 year old girl and 14 year old boy) once on the machine. After years of poor health and failing kidneys, I am slowly getting back to normal after a bi-lateral nephrectomy. My left kidney weighed 6.8kgs and the right 7.2kgs when removed.**

I have been on the transplant waiting list for a year and a half. I am trying to have a normal life with my family on every other day, but it is very difficult. I dream of the day when we can go on a family holiday—before my kids grow up and it's all too late.

I have had one failed attempt at a renal transplant where the surgeon cancelled at the very last second. I am so very happy to have had one chance. My thoughts and huge gratitude go out to the wonderful donor family that almost gave me the chance to get back to normal. Hopefully one day it will happen and be successful. I encourage everyone to talk about organ donation. Donate life!

Paul



**Australia is a world  
leader for successful  
transplant outcomes.**



# Thank you

**I was born with kidneys that did not work. As a baby I had one removed and somehow a surgeon got the other one to function. I was not allowed to play rugby, but apart from that I was a normal kid.**

At the age of 13, I started to get headaches, feel tired, thirsty and needed to go to the toilet more often. I was told that I needed a kidney transplant as the kidney I had was no longer working. I am one of the lucky ones as, following all the tests, my parents and sister were all compatible. Dad donated the kidney and I had the transplant. After a rocky year, things went really well. I was able to finish school, study medicine at university and travel overseas. I got married and had a lovely daughter. Things were great.

Then came the illness. I contracted a virus that resulted in the transplant failing. Despite the excellent treatment I received, the only option was another transplant.

My wife was pregnant with our second child at the time and my mother decided she would donate her kidney.

Unfortunately there were problems with the blood vessels on one of her kidneys, so she needed to go through a long series of tests and reviews before she was able to donate.

Eventually the surgeon agreed to remove her kidney, repair the blood vessel and transplant it into me—a risky and rarely performed procedure.

After a period of eight months existing on dialysis, not sleeping and feeling tired all the time, during which time our second daughter was born, I had the transplant. After 24 hours, I was better, being able to live and be a husband and father to my family again.

Since then, I have completed my medical training and I am now a Physician. I am eternally grateful to my parents and sister for their love and support, staff at the renal units and to my wife and children who have supported and stuck with me through it all.

**Christopher**



**Discover the facts**  
**Decide about becoming**  
**an organ and tissue donor and**  
**Discuss your decision with**  
**the people close to you.**



# Once only second chance

**T**his is being penned from my hospital bed with about two weeks before I get to go home following a double lung transplant. Most of us get one shot at life and quite frankly a lot of us don't treat that honour with any great respect.

We abuse our bodies and smoke (I did), we eat poorly and drink too much (I did) and we generally wait until something breaks down before we bother to seek medical help.

My actions and unfortunate exposure to toxins earlier in my life saw me on permanent oxygen treatment for the past two years. Given a short term survival rating about six months ago, I was extremely fortunate to be placed on the transplant waiting list.

That's right, a waiting list! There are literally hundreds of very usable human organs being buried and/or cremated every week in this country mainly through ignorance of how easy it is to organise to become an organ donor.

The solution is simple – We need people like you to talk to those you love in order that they

become donors and get the opportunity to give a once only second chance to others.

Anyway enough soapboxing. At least this grandfather will be at home in a couple of weeks playing with eight grandchildren, seven children, a loving wife and family who would not have seen me again if it had not been for the unbelievable generosity and unselfish attitude of a stranger, who I'll never meet, and his/her grieving family.

My organ donor has given me the true gift of life. It is now my responsibility to honour those organs for the rest of my life. I am giving 101% for what I consider is my ONCE ONLY SECOND CHANCE at life. Thank you never seems enough, neither does a million thank you's.

Any other words I seek to describe my gratitude sound hollow when placed against the enormity of your family's grief. So generous donor whoever you are, I now consider you my eighth child and trust that I can make you as proud of me as I am grateful to you.

Tony



**Discover the facts**  
**Decide about becoming**  
**an organ and tissue donor and**  
**Discuss your decision with**  
**the people close to you.**



# Islets of dreams

**M**y journey towards islet transplantation began over 35 years ago after being diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. After years of five insulin injections daily my condition deteriorated and I began to lose 'hypo' awareness.

I lived and worked as a classroom teacher with the constant fear of a major 'hypo'. There have been many times when my husband, Kerry, needed to inject me with glucagon to raise my blood sugar levels as I was either unconscious or unable to treat myself for a severe 'hypo'. I lost my self confidence and was afraid to undertake everyday chores.

Five years ago my doctor advised me to go on the insulin pump. Hypo awareness returned but this was short lived. During a visit to my endocrinologist he spoke of a new research program, islet transplantation, and thought I may be a good candidate for the program. (Islets are the cells in your pancreas which produce insulin.) For two and a half years I underwent extensive tests and my declining confidence and frequent 'hypos' led me to retire from teaching.

In 2010 I received the call for South Australia's first islet transplant.

My life post transplant has changed in many ways, I can now confidently say 'I have a life.' Within days and weeks of the operation my blood sugars were within the normal range, hypo awareness had returned and my pump had been removed. Blood sugars were controlled by one injection of insulin per day.

Six months after the first transplant I underwent the second. Two months later I became free of daily insulin injections. My confidence has returned and I am back teaching—'hypo free'.

My new life would not have been possible without the unselfish generosity of my donors and their families. They made a heart wrenching decision to give a perfect stranger a chance of life only dreamed about and because of their generosity the dream has come true for myself and my family.

Mary



Mary and husband Kerry with grandchildren Mackenzie, Brodie, William and Blake

Do you know the  
donation decision  
of your loved ones?





# For me, every day is a blessing

**I**t was many years ago that I was given the gift of life. Thanks to my donor I have enjoyed many milestones most people take for granted. I have shared the joy of seeing my children married and I have been blessed with grandchildren.

I was diagnosed with a rare genetic disorder which meant that, over the course of my life, my lungs had a total breakdown. Over time my health deteriorated so chronically that I was put on oxygen 24/7. I barely had enough puff to walk to the letterbox to get the daily mail. The oxygen tank became my handbag—my lifeline.

At the time, to have the transplant I had to relocate to have the best chance of survival. The relocation was a major upheaval for our family—not just geographically but also emotionally.

After 17 long months, I got the call we had all been waiting for. That day, I didn't know if I would live or die but what I did know is that I didn't want anyone else to have to endure such a life-changing operation so far from their family and support.

Once well enough, I mounted a campaign for a lung transplant unit in Perth. One of my proudest moments, and one I fought tirelessly

for, was the opening of the lung transplant unit at Royal Perth Hospital in 2004. I also set up the Heart and Lung Transplant Foundation of WA to provide support for others walking the same road. The foundation also fundraises for vital equipment to continue transplants.

It hasn't been an easy journey, but it's certainly been fulfilling. My mantra in life has been 'everything that is difficult is worthwhile'—and to this day, I attest to that.

Yvonne



Yvonne

**Australia is a world  
leader for successful  
transplant outcomes.**



# Jason

**J**ason was a fit energetic 27 year old who had just moved from South Australia to Queensland to start a new life. He was working as a carpenter and loved living in Queensland. One day he started to have shortness of breath and decided to go and see a doctor to find out what was wrong. The next thing he knew he was in an ambulance off to the Prince Charles Hospital as he had an enlarged heart and had been diagnosed with cardiomyopathy.

The next six months of his life were a struggle as he could no longer work and was tired and out of breath all the time. He got so sick and was talking with the doctor about being put onto life support when the doctor received “the call” that they had found Jason a heart. Words can’t describe how grateful we were that he had been given this gift. Within one week he was able to go home.

He then received a letter to say he had also saved the life of a 16 year old boy as they could use the valves of his original heart.

He returned to South Australia to be closer to his family where he lived life to the fullest, even competing and winning medals in the

Transplant Games. Sadly one month shy of his six year anniversary, Jason passed away from heart failure. Without that gift of life we never would have had Jason for those extra years. I have always been an organ donor but never really realised just how important it is until it affected someone I loved.

Amanda



Jason

**Any day is a good day  
to talk about organ  
and tissue donation.**



# Priceless gift given to me by a generous donor

**I was 18 years old when I was told I had renal failure. Although I had never heard of it before it did not take me long to experience it.**

I was putting on weight so I went to Weight Watchers. I stuck to the diet but every week my weight was going up not down. My weight rose to 72kg and my legs looked like trunks of a tree. I went to see a doctor and another for a second opinion and was put straight onto dialysis.

Dad and I went to visit Mum in hospital on my birthday in 1986. She was upset because due to a previous illness she was unable to donate one of her kidneys. 'Don't worry Mum, it will happen', we said.

Exactly one week later the call came. I was told it was not the best match so I could say no! Are you crazy?

The kidney took a long time to work. I was allowed a day out, so I went home to a stuffed roast chicken—my favourite. When I was told my kidney was working properly I was sure it was due to Mum's cooking.

I named my kidney 'Kingsley' as dad had wanted a Kingsley in the family. I travelled, had a full time job, danced all night with my friends and more.

Kingsley lasted 18 years and I eventually went back on dialysis. It was harder to accept this time.

Three years later while shopping with Mum I received the call and this time it was a perfect match.

It is in giving that we receive.

Suzanne



**Around 1600 people  
are on official transplant  
waiting lists at any one time**



# Double or nothing

Being told that I was going to need a double lung transplant at 18yrs of age due to Cystic Fibrosis was something which was both exciting and scary at the same time. It was exciting knowing that there was an opportunity out there, but scary knowing what would happen if I never got there. Life would definitely have to be better than what I had at the time, with no contact with the wider community and being stuck at home.

The wait during the next seven months was extremely hard. Every time the phone rang, I was on tenterhooks. Could this be the call? But the call at midnight was unmistakable. Containing my nervous excitement in case it was a false alarm was difficult.

Things weren't simple following my transplant. I had my best friend, my dad, with me the whole way. He would just sit beside me keeping me company, reading the paper. He was there for my highs and for my lows. I went from

being so sick before my transplant, depending on him for everything, to walking everywhere and enjoying things with him after the transplant. 'I was a new man'.

Almost eight years later, I never thought that I would need to go through things all over again with another transplant. I was told I would need a kidney transplant. I just thought 'what next', knowing the wait for kidneys can be a long one.

My dad was once again with me throughout the whole process. Not wanting this to take over my life, he made the decision to donate his kidney to me without a second thought.

I was once told that I would never turn 12, but that is in the distant past with a lung and now kidney transplant. I look forward to living every day and I take nothing for granted. You can't tell anyone how their life is going to turn out—you just make your own destiny.

Joel



Joel and his best friend, his dad

**The most important thing  
that helps a family's decision  
is their knowing the donation  
decision of their loved ones.**





# Remembering you

## In loving memory of Paul—our son

**I**f tears could build a stairway, and memory  
a lane, I'd walk right up to Heaven and  
bring you home again.'

Paul was 22 years old when he passed away  
from an asthma attack.

Paul watched a news program on organ  
donation and one night said to us if anything  
ever happens to him they could go ahead and  
use any part of him, if it could save a life.

When the doctors at the hospital told us  
they would have to turn off the life support,  
one doctor asked if we had considered organ  
donation—we didn't have to make that  
decision because of what Paul had said to us.

It was Paul's wish that made it a bit easier  
for us. I think it is a great issue that should be  
discussed with families.

Claire



**Ask and know your  
loved one's donation wishes**







**Australian Government**  
**Organ and Tissue Authority**



© Commonwealth of Australia 2012

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the Commonwealth. Requests and enquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to the Commonwealth Copyright Administration, Attorney-General's Department, 3-5 National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600 or posted at [www.ag.gov.au/cca](http://www.ag.gov.au/cca)

**Enquiries**

If you would like to comment on the *DonateLife Book of Life*, or have any queries, please contact:

Organ and Tissue Authority  
*DonateLife Book of Life*  
PO Box 295  
CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608

Phone: 02 6198 9800  
Fax: 02 6198 9801  
Email: [enquiries@donatelife.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@donatelife.gov.au)  
Website: [www.donatelife.gov.au](http://www.donatelife.gov.au)

**Alternative format**

The *DonateLife Book of Life* is available electronically on the Authority's website at [www.donatelife.gov.au](http://www.donatelife.gov.au)