OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL DONATELIFE
COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

The twin objectives of the national reform program to increase organ and tissue donation for transplantation are: to increase the capability and capacity within the health system to maximise donation rates; and to build community awareness and stakeholder engagement across Australia to promote organ and tissue donation.

There are around 1,400 Australians on official transplant waiting lists at any one time. Yet of the approximate 74,000 deaths in hospital each year, approx. 1-2% are in the specific circumstances in an Intensive Care Unit or Emergency Department where organ donation is possible. Many more people can become eye and tissue donors as tissues can be donated up to 24 hours after death, regardless of where death occurred.

To optimise every potential organ and tissue donation, the national DonateLife Community Awareness and Education Program encourages all Australians to:

- Discover the facts about organ and tissue donation and the benefits of organ and tissue transplantation.
- Decide and register an informed decision about becoming an organ and tissue donor on the Australian Organ Donor Register (AODR).
- Discuss donation decisions with family members and close friends so that each other’s decisions on organ and tissue donation are known.

The intended outcomes of the national Community Awareness and Education Program are that more Australians:

- are aware of the facts about organ and tissue donation, including the life-saving and life-transforming outcomes made possible through donation.
- make and register an informed donation decision on the AODR.
- discuss and know the donation decisions of family members and are confident in supporting the decisions of their loved ones, should the situation arise.

Target Audiences
Organ and tissue donation is a topic that is relevant to all Australians. In addition to engaging with the general Australian community, there are certain segments of the population that are likely to benefit from targeted engagement. This is because they represent those Australians who are less likely to have made a decision about organ and tissue donation, registered on the AODR, or discussed their wishes with their loved ones.

The priority target audiences are:

- Young adults aged 18-29 years
- Males
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
- Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
Key Activities under the Community Awareness and Education Program

1. DonateLife Week 2017

DonateLife Week is the national awareness week to promote organ and tissue donation in Australia. It is led by the Organ and Tissue Authority (OTA), in partnership with the DonateLife Network and key stakeholders, as a key component of the reform program.

The dates for DonateLife Week 2017 are Sunday 30 July – Sunday 6 August.

The theme for DonateLife Week 2017 is ‘Make it count. Register now to save lives at donatelife.gov.au”, in support of the national online donor registration campaign.

The Week serves as an annual reminder on the importance of registering your donation decision on the Australian Organ Donor Register and sharing your decision with your loved ones.

Activities during DonateLife Week should promote awareness of the Australian Organ Donor Register as the only national register to record decisions regarding organ and tissue donation for transplantation after death, and provide information on the ways in which people can join the Register. Importantly, activities should motivate people to take action and register.

2. DonateLife Thank You Day

DonateLife Thank You Day is a national day to honour all living and deceased organ and tissue donors and their families and to acknowledge their generosity, which saves and transforms the lives of others.

Each year the lives of hundreds of Australians are saved and transformed through the generosity of living and deceased organ and tissue donors and their families that agreed to donation.

Australians of all ages, faith and cultural backgrounds can one day be in need of an organ or tissue transplant. DonateLife Thank You Day is an opportunity for the Australian community to come together and say ‘thank you’ to the individuals and families, whose stories should inspire us all to register on the Australian Organ Donor Register and discuss our donation decisions.

3. National Donor Online Registration Campaign

In DonateLife Week 2016 the OTA launched a national awareness campaign to increase the number of Australians who are registered on the AODR, through improving public awareness of the importance and process of registration, and the importance of family discussion and knowledge of donation decisions.

The national campaign activity continues in 2017 including in conjunction with DonateLife Week 2017. As noted above, the theme and focus of DonateLife Week 2017 will be on promoting the importance and process of registering on the AODR.

Registration and family knowledge of donation decisions makes a clear and strong difference on donation consent rates. Nine in ten of families agree to donation where the deceased is a registered donor, compared to the national average of 60%. The consent rate drops to just 50% when the deceased is not a registered donor and the family had no prior knowledge of their wishes.
4. **Community Awareness Grants**

The Community Awareness Grants program provides funding for projects or activities that are aligned with and contribute to the delivery of the national DonateLife Community Awareness and Education Program. The focus of each round of grants supports the overall direction of the Community Awareness and Education Program. Through grant activities, participating organisations are able to extend the impact and reach of the national Community Awareness and Education Program to new audiences at a local and national level.

5. **Community Education and Awareness**

Community education and engagement is central to the Community Awareness and Education Program. The OTA provides a range of communication materials and resources for use in community education activities. You can view many of these resources at [http://www.donatelife.gov.au/get-involved](http://www.donatelife.gov.au/get-involved)

Resources include:

- The *DonateLife Guide for Community Speakers* resource (including a PowerPoint presentation).
- Online DonateLife Tool Kit.
- Multimedia products including a 3 minute education animation on organ and tissue donation in Australia and video case studies.
- Printed and online public information materials.
- The DonateLife Book of Life in online.
- Multicultural (faith, cultural and in-language) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources including printed, online and multimedia resources.
- School Education Resources for Years 8 and 9
- The DonateLife website at www.donatelife.gov.au

6. **Engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse audiences**

The national DonateLife Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communications and Engagement Program facilitates access to culturally appropriate information about organ and tissue donation. Priority faith communities include Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Catholic and Orthodox faith communities. Priority language groups included Arabic, Turkish, Vietnamese, Chinese (traditional), Spanish, Greek and Italian, as well as the Indian cultural community.

The OTA’s research identified that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are less likely to have made a decision about organ and tissue donation or to have discussed this decision with their families. Some people from these communities may be unsure if their religion or culture permits organ and tissue donation.

Following consultation with leaders from the priority groups and there are now religious rulings for the priority faith groups in support of organ donation. Further, DonateLife statements of support have now been signed by faith and cultural leaders, organisations and ethnic media partners to express their support of organ and tissue donation.

7. Media and public relations

Media and public relations activities are central to the Community Awareness and Education Program. The media remains a highly influential platform for educating Australians about organ and tissue donation. Through engaging with the media we aim to:

- Communicate nationally consistent and accurate messages about organ and tissue donation for transplantation and the importance of family discussion and knowledge of donation decisions;
- Increase public confidence and reduce public confusion regarding organ and tissue donation; and
- Drive behavioural change and motivate people to talk to their family, friends and loved ones about their decisions to be an organ and tissue donor, and register their donation decision on the AODR.

8. Social media and website

The aim of the national DonateLife social media (DonateLife Facebook, DonateLife Instagram and DonateLifeToday Twitter) and website activity is to engage target audiences on the topic of organ and tissue donation and to enable them to connect with others about issues relating to this topic. The www.donatelife.gov.au website provides a platform for all Australians to Discover, Decide and Discuss organ and tissue donation. The website provides information for the general public through to health professionals on organ and tissue donation for transplantation.