

# STATEMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL ORTHODOX BISHOPS OF OCEANIA

## ON ORGAN and TISSUE DONATION

Medical science has in recent years developed worldwide the practice of **organ and tissue transplants** in the human body.

This honourable effort of science is to replace tissue or organs that have deteriorated, through the offering of caring **donors**, such that the **recipients** of this 'gift' are able to live, whereas they previously had no hope whatsoever.

We are all called, therefore, to support the practice of such transplants, and to encourage one another to become **donors**, thereby greatly assisting our suffering fellow human beings, especially as it is possible that we may be **recipients** in the future, depending on circumstances.

The Orthodox Church fully respects the dignity and individual integrity of the human person as created by God in His image and likeness and endowed with free will. Therefore, the question of **organ and tissue donation** is left to the personal choice of the individual in consultation with their spiritual father and medical doctor.

That having been said, as permitted by the Orthodox Church, the individual is guided to understand the following points of reference when making a choice:

1. Firstly, if it is a **living donation**, it is permitted to donate duplicate organs, such as kidneys and the like. This can be done as long as the life of the donor is never brought into question, nor the physical appearance unacceptably compromised.
2. Secondly, any **post-mortem donation** is possible, following full biological death. However, the Orthodox Church understands the body to be the temple of the Holy Spirit and requests that special care be given to the donor's body in the process of harvesting and in preparation for proper burial. The Orthodox Church does not condone cremation.

As a result, it would be good for us, whenever the circumstance for a **transplant** arises in our immediate environment, to seek the advice of both our spiritual fathers and specialist doctors about what can be done, so that we are not indifferent or unmoved in the face of such a serious matter. It requires not only a sense of human solidarity, but also of equal respect towards the **donor** and the **recipient**.

28 April 2014

Archbishop Stylianos, Chairman *ex officio* (Ecumenical Patriarchate – Australia)  
Metropolitan Paul (Antiochian Church – Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines)  
Metropolitan Hilarion (Russian Church – ROCOR First Hierarchy)  
Bishop Irinej (Serbian Church – Australia and New Zealand)  
Bishop Mihail (Romanian Church – Australia and New Zealand)  
Metropolitan Amphilochios (Ecumenical Patriarchate – New Zealand)  
Bishop Ezekiel (Ecumenical Patriarchate – Assistant Bishop)  
Bishop Seraphim (Ecumenical Patriarchate – Assistant Bishop)  
Bishop Nikandros (Ecumenical Patriarchate – Assistant Bishop)  
Bishop Iakovos (Ecumenical Patriarchate – Assistant Bishop)