

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 30/31 May 2011

Question: E11-342

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION FOR TRANSPLANTATION

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Can you explain the process for organ donation from start to finish?

Answer:

This is a simplified description of the organ donation process.

The organ donation process varies from person to person depending on their particular circumstances; however, the same general pattern applies to most donations.

When a person dies in a situation where they can become an organ donor and, where relevant, the organ donor coordinator (ODC) confirms that a person has been properly certified as brain dead, then the family is asked to advise of their loved one's wishes regarding donation and their consent is sought for the donation to proceed.

Once this consent has been given, the family will be assisted to complete the necessary paperwork to authorise donation.

While each situation may vary slightly, the following organ donation processes occur:

- The potential donor is medically supported to ensure that their organs remain viable for transplantation;
- The donor family and the ODC will complete a questionnaire about the potential donor's medical and social history;
- The ODC will coordinate the necessary medical tests to match the donor organs to potential recipients and to check for infectious diseases;
- The ODC will consult DonateLife medical staff on call regarding medical suitability of the potential donor;

- The ODC consults transplant teams across Australia to match the donor with compatible recipients;
- Once compatible recipients have been identified, the donor will be transferred to the operating theatre for the retrieval of donor organs;
- The family is provided with an opportunity to farewell the donor after retrieval;
- Once the organs have been retrieved they are immediately transported to hospitals for transplantation;
- The ODC provides the donor family with information and support throughout the organ donation process, follow-up support is available after the organ donation process has occurred;
- If the donor family wishes, the ODC will make contact to tell them of the donation outcome and how the recipients are recovering; and
- At some future date, and if both donor and recipient families agree, letters may be exchanged anonymously through the DonateLife agency. By law in Australia, the identity of the donor and the recipient is not to be disclosed.