



The Asian Pacific Society of Nephrology

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Committee Secretary

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade

PO Box 6021

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

I am writing in response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Human Organ Trafficking and Organ Transplant Tourism on behalf of the Asian Pacific Society of Nephrology, an organization which represents all the National Societies of Nephrology in the Asian Pacific region and aims to promote and encourage the advancement of scientific knowledge and research in all aspects of nephrology, dialysis and transplantation, and to promote the exchange and dissemination of this knowledge in the region.

Although countries throughout the Asian Pacific region have prohibited the sale of human organs, illegal transplants remain a problem in several countries. In addition to domestic organ trafficking, which usually involves payment to individuals willing to provide a kidney or part of a liver for transplantation as a living “donor”, patients travel between countries within the region as transplant “tourists”. In all such cases, patients, health professionals and others involved exploit vulnerabilities in systems designed to evaluate and protect prospective transplant candidates and organ donors; they also take advantage of broader social vulnerabilities in the form of poverty, unemployment, and poor health literacy among the population of potential organ sellers.

Such practices pose significant risks to the health of transplant recipients, in the form of infections and other complications, and sometimes to their financial wellbeing. Organ “donors” also commonly suffer serious physical, psychological and socioeconomic harms. Furthermore, awareness of organ trafficking and transplant “tourism” undermines public trust in organ donation and transplantation programs, and healthcare systems more generally. This has a detrimental effect on efforts to establish deceased donation programs, and to improve equitable access to transplantation for all. Nephrology services are particularly affected, as kidney transplants comprise the majority of organ trafficking cases, and inequities in access to care for end stage kidney disease are exacerbated by trafficking and transplant tourism.

As a high income country and a regional leader in organ transplantation, Australia has a duty of care to other countries in the region to assist them in combatting organ



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trafficking and transplant tourism. By acceding to the 2014 Council of Europe Convention Against Trafficking in Human Organs, Australia would encourage other countries in the region to do likewise. The Convention not only reinforces existing commitments in national laws which prohibit the removal of human organs from living or deceased donors where valid consent has not been obtained or trade in organs has occurred, it supports the implementation of measures designed to protect victims of trafficking and to promote equity in access to transplant services. The Asian Pacific Society of Nephrology shares these goals, and encourages Australia to consider this legislative strategy and other practical measures to help address organ trafficking within the region.

Regards,

Sincerely,



Prof Philip K.T. Li
President