



## GIFT OF LIFE INCORPORATED – PRESIDENT’S REPORT

### AGM – 14 OCTOBER 2020

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Gift of Life continued to pursue its main priorities: policy advocacy as well as promotion of greater community awareness and education through events and activities aimed at increasing organ and tissue donation and registration during the year.

Our activities during 2019/20 were significantly affected, initially by the impact of the heavy bushfire smoke around Canberra on planning for and participation in Gift of Life’s annual DonateLife Walk and later by the restrictions imposed by the ACT Government following the declaration of a health emergency as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in early March. During the second half of the financial year our usual range of activities – like those of others in the community - were significantly curtailed.

Gift of Life’s DonateLife Walk 2020 was held around Lake Burley Griffin for the 14th year on 26 February with over 2,000 participants. It was launched by the Australian Government Minister responsible for the Organ and Tissue Authority, Mark Coulton and ACT Health Minister, Rachel Stephen-Smith. The Walk was supported by grants from the Organ and Tissue Authority (OTA) and ACT Health and is a significant feature of the national DonateLife campaign in promoting greater awareness of the benefits of organ and tissue donation to the Australian community. It highlighted the importance of more people signing onto the Australian Organ Donor Register in saving many more Australian lives. Looking back, we were very fortunate to be able to hold the Walk at that time just before the Covid restrictions on community activities were introduced.

We also arranged stalls during orientation week at Market Day events at both the Australian National University and University of Canberra in late February in the lead up to the Walk and encouraged more students to sign on to the Register. We also participated in national DonateLife Week activities organised by OTA in late July by contacting those who participated in our Walk and encouraging them to sign onto the Register.

Throughout the year, Gift of Life Board members participated actively in meetings of the OTA’s Community Engagement Group which considered issues including those relating to the DonateLife process whereby recipients make contact with donor families by anonymous letter after transplants to express their appreciation for the generous gift of organ donation. We also participated in meetings of the DonateLife ACT Advisory Committee at which recent developments were discussed. We urged that greater use of trained requestors be used in conducting the family donation conversation and that intensivist doctors involved also undertake such training to help bring about improved consent rates in future.

Good progress was achieved during 2019 for numbers of donations and successful transplants in Australia. There remains a need to boost Australia’s rate of organ and tissue donation - in particular, while the family consent rate has now lifted to around 65%, efforts must continue to lift this level further as well as to expand the donor pool. We encourage people to discuss organ and tissue donation with their family and close friends and to ask and know each other’s donation decision. The importance of registering that decision on the Australian Organ Donor Register is emphasized during all of Gift of Life’s activities. Significant progress is being achieved through the Government’s reform program, but this process will take time and much more remains to be done.

After ten years as Gift of Life President, I am now standing aside at this AGM with the aim of rejuvenating Gift of Life's future activities. I am very pleased that over this period Gift of Life has made a significant contribution towards the promotion of organ and tissue donation in the ACT, the surrounding region and nationally and also that considerable progress is now being achieved by OTA and the DonateLife network nationwide in encouraging greater numbers of successful donations and transplants each year for the wider benefit of the Australian community.

David O'Leary, President, Gift of Life Incorporated