

GIFT OF LIFE INCORPORATED – PRESIDENT’S REPORT AGM – 15 JUNE 2017

Gift of Life has 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.

We raised a number of ways of increasing consent rates with the Government such as “soft” First Person Consent for those who have registered as organ donors and more empathetic means of conducting the family donation conversation, efforts to widen the donor pool through extended criteria for organ transplantation and increased donation by circulatory death (DCD). We also raised improved online registration, and increased resources for transplant units within hospitals which are becoming increasingly stretched.

Membership of the Organ and Tissue Advisory Council until December 2016 and attendance at the DonateLife Forum in Brisbane in May 2017 offered excellent opportunities for input to policy. We participated in OTA Partners meetings, a consultative group on contacts between donors and recipients and DonateLife ACT community/consumer and clinical advisory committees.

The 10th anniversary Walk on 24 February 2016 – sponsored by the Organ and Tissue Authority - attracted over 5,700 participants. The 2017 Walk held on 1 March 2017 with around 4,500 participants was launched by the Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove, Health Minister Greg Hunt, Minister responsible for organ and tissue donation Ken Wyatt and ACT Health Minister Meegan Fitzharris and is now a feature of the national DonateLife campaign.

We have cooperated closely with the ACT Government and the National Arboretum Canberra to develop design plans for a special Gift of Life Garden at the Arboretum. These plans are now well advanced. The ACT Government and Gift of Life Incorporated provided initial funding and fund raising has begun. The Garden is expected to open towards the end of 2017.

We arranged a stall during orientation week at ANU Market Day and at the University of Canberra and addressed medical students at the ANU in a joint presentation with DonateLife ACT. We also pursued closer links with the business community through the Canberra Business Chamber.

Record national figures were achieved in 2016 for numbers of donations and successful transplantations. There remains a need to boost Australia’s rate of organ and tissue donation - in particular, to lift family consent rates to a higher level and 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. We also emphasise the importance of registering that decision on the Australian Organ Donor Register. Significant progress is being achieved through the Government’s reform program, but the process will take time and much more remains to be done.

David O’Leary, President, Gift of Life Incorporated