

GIFT OF LIFE INCORPORATED – PRESIDENT’S REPORT AGM – 21 MAY 2018

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 met with the new CEO of the Organ and Tissue Authority (OTA), Lucinda Barry, in November 2017 and raised our plans for the 2018 Walk and for the Gift of Life Garden at the National Arboretum Canberra. We also discussed ways of increasing consent rates such as “soft” First Person Consent for those who have registered as organ donors and more empathetic means of conducting the family donation conversation and efforts to widen the donor pool through extended criteria for organ transplantation and increased donation by circulatory death (DCD). We also covered resource constraints for transplant units within hospitals which are becoming increasingly stretched and means of conducting closer dialogue with community organisations. In addition, we participated in regular DonateLife ACT advisory committee meetings.

The 2018 Walk held around Lake Burley Griffin for the 12th year on 28 February with over 4,500 participants was launched by the Federal Minister responsible for organ and tissue donation Ken Wyatt and ACT Member for Ginninderra, Tara Cheyne. The Walk was supported by the OTA and ACT Health and is a significant feature of the national DonateLife campaign.

We cooperated closely with the National Arboretum Canberra in choosing a landscape design for a Gift of Life Garden at the Arboretum. A tender process for construction of the Garden is currently underway. An associated sculpture to be installed within the Garden has also been selected and is now being developed. The Garden is expected to be officially opened towards the end of 2018.

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

Solid progress was achieved in 2017 for numbers of donations and successful transplants. 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 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