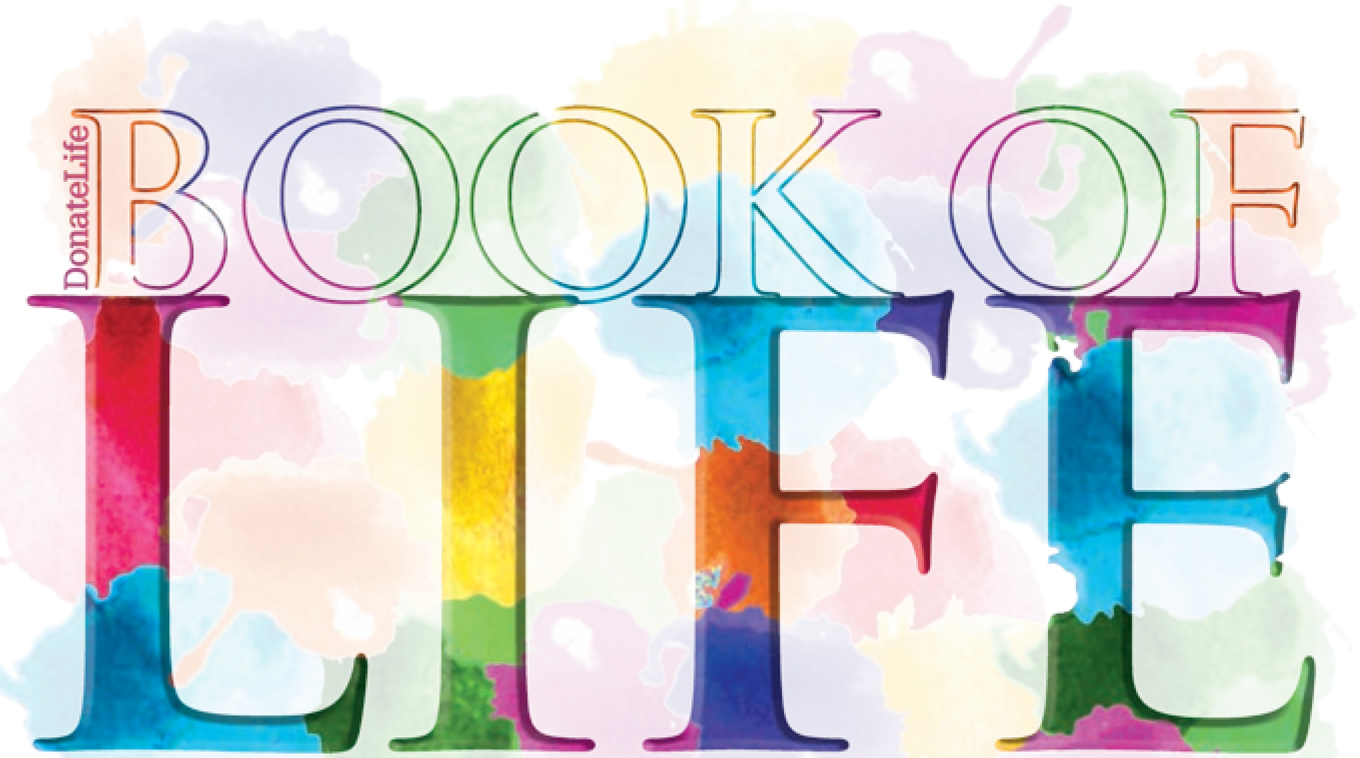


DonateLife

BOOK OF LIFE

A collection of life-saving and life-changing stories from people touched by **organ and tissue donation.**

Volume 9

donatelife

DonateLife Book of Life

DonateLife **Book of Life** Volume 9

Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

Foreword to the DonateLife *Book of Life*

by Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, AC
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

As the inaugural DonateLife Ambassador, I have been privileged to observe the impressive leadership of the DonateLife team and agency network in managing organ and tissue donations throughout the country, and in educating Australians about the issues that are central to our decisions to give life.

Inspired by the work of these outstanding professionals, the DonateLife *Book of Life* is a heartfelt appeal to all Australians urging us to find out the facts about organ and tissue donation, to make well informed decisions, and to discuss those decisions with the people close to us.

Here is a collection of stories from brave and thoughtful Australians whose lives have been touched and transformed by a donor's life-affirming decision. These honest and grateful accounts pay tribute to the generosity of lives tragically and abruptly ended: the ultimate act of giving life to another as one's own life passes.

The DonateLife *Book of Life* starts its journey around Australia in DonateLife Week, Sunday 20 to Sunday 27 February 2011, a campaign led by the Australian Government's Organ and Tissue Authority to raise donation awareness among Australians and to increase our donation rates.

It is my hope in 2011 that, as these stories are shared across the nation, many more of us will be moved to think, talk and act on a decision that can help bring life and healing to thousands of Australian lives.

This is a decision for all of us and each of us. We share life and we share a capacity to give life. Our personal experiences of living and giving are most powerfully told through our stories. This book is our carriage and our conduit for ensuring that our decisions bring the greatest good to the greatest number in the Australian community.

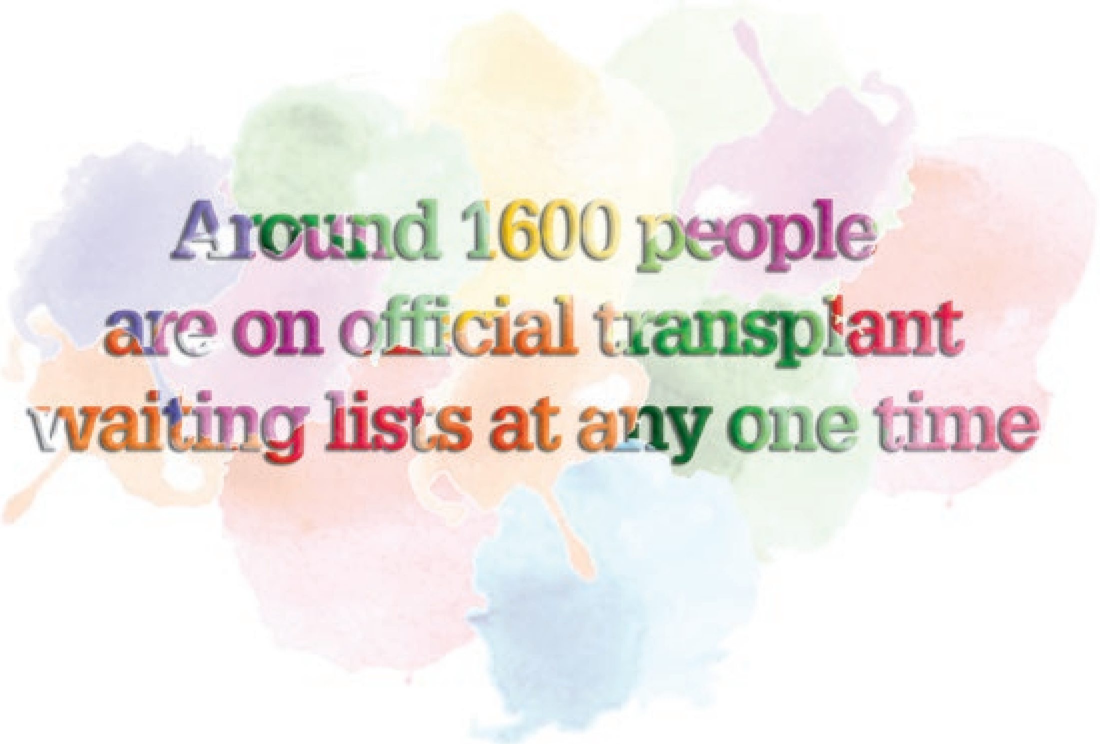
We are forever indebted to those Australians who have chosen to give life. They have made their mark in the most profound ways and the DonateLife *Book of Life* bears their courageous stamp.

May these pages travel far and deep across our generous land.

Quentin Bryce

6 February 2011

Government House Canberra ACT 2600 Australia
TELEPHONE +61(2) 6283 3525 FACSIMILE +61(2) 6283 3595



Around 1600 people are on official transplant waiting lists at any one time

donatelife

My family

My name is Cheryl. I am 50 years old and I was given a second chance. I received a liver transplant.

I am a single parent with two teenage boys who were 14 and 15 at the time. They were staying with their grandparents while I was in hospital dying. They hadn't seen me in months and the hospital often wouldn't let me talk to them on the phone because my lungs had filled with fluid and my kidneys were failing. I was on dialysis.

The phone calls were stressful because I was gasping for breath and they knew that I was really sick—but not how bad it really was. My eldest was in Year 10 and was trying to cope with study and his ill mother. My youngest was the rock, helping his brother and trying to stay brave for all concerned.

That time is sometimes a blur for me, I was so sick I was delirious and had trouble remembering even the smallest of things. I didn't want to scare my children but I missed them enormously. I didn't want to leave them without a mother.

I fought my hardest to stay alive but when your body is giving up on you there isn't much you can do. My family had had a tough year. My sister lost her eldest daughter, Naomi, to cancer. She was 35 and left behind an 18 month old daughter, Scarlett. My brother, Les, died from cancer as well. My sisters, Leonie and Christine, took turns staying with me every day while I waited. The strain on them was enormous.

The call came to the nurses desk—they had a liver for me. I was awake, and when the nurse approached me with a huge smile on his face I knew.

I felt stronger than I had in months and nearly jumped out of the bed. Please, please I said, I need to ring my sisters and sons. The nurse told me to calm down and got a phone for me. I rang both my sisters who jumped in their cars and raced to the hospital.

They promised to ring my children as soon as I went into surgery. I knew it was going to be OK. I believed I was going to make it. I silently thanked the family that had had to make the hard decision to give me life. I knew someone had died to let me live and I thanked them again and again as I slipped into sleep. The surgery took nine hours and 22 litres of blood. It didn't go as planned but I made it through. All I needed was that chance.

Today I am still going well and have only had a few minor problems after the surgery. My sons are now 18 and 19 and getting on with their lives. I am so grateful to the family of the person who made the decision to donate. He/she is the hero of my family. I think of them often and hope that their family is doing well. Many of my friends and co-workers have decided to donate since hearing of my story and I hope this can inspire someone else as well.

Cheryl

Discover the facts
Decide about becoming
an organ and tissue donor and
Discuss your decision with
the people close to you.

donatelife

My left kidney

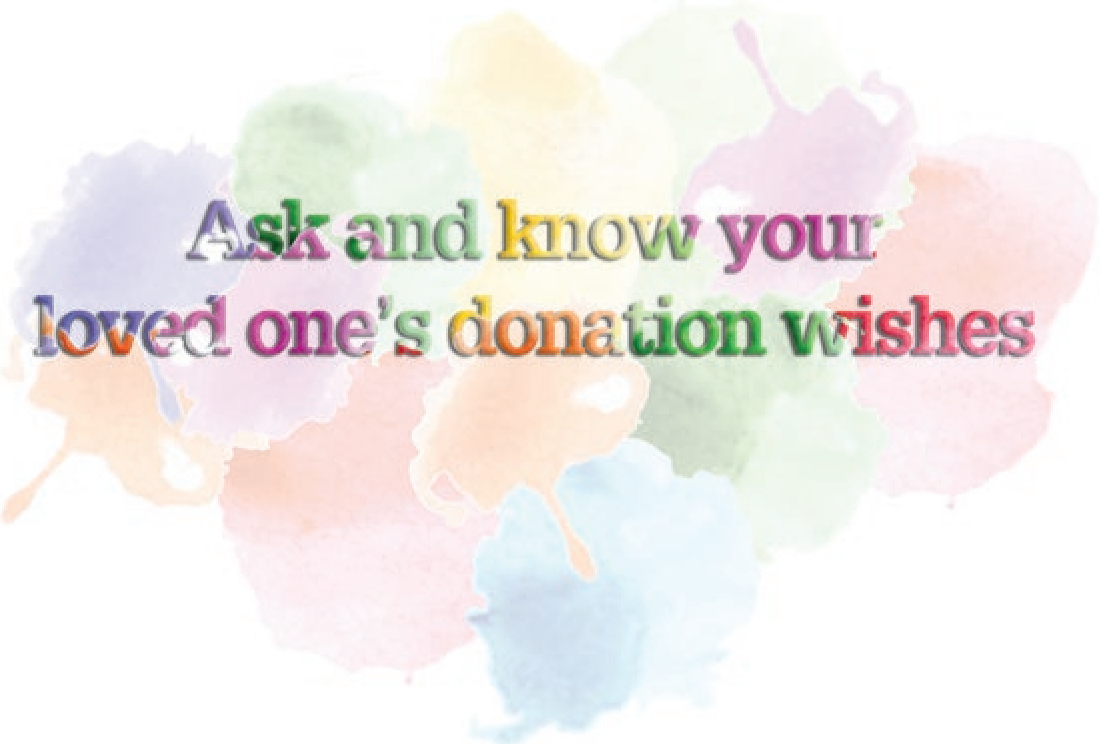
Jude is a big part of my life and she has always been a source of total honesty for my life. I remember staying with Jude and sharing the mundane morning ritual of brushing our teeth and watching with awe at the massive array of tablets she would calmly throw down. Jude has never appeared ill. It was dialysis that spelled out the severity of what was happening to someone I love.

Dialysis can be quite frightening, whether observing or more hands on it's quite scary. I have seen fear and pain in patients' eyes – but never in Jude's eyes. It was more like a fierce determination to have her blood pumped out of her, cleaned then pumped back in until the next time.

I have received many reactions since before our transplant and after. The decision to give a living piece of my body away is nowhere near as impressive as it sounds. It was quick and simple and I have never reconsidered it for a moment. This was a selfish act for me personally as it was nothing whatsoever to do with loss for anyone else but me; I couldn't watch someone I love die without trying to do anything.

So I harassed specialists, my own GP, family, friends and the amazing renal nurses, they all served as my technical support centre—without this level of care I doubt we all would have made it through the process with just the scars we signed up for. This part of my life has been a constant source of pride and surprise for me and learning that anyone is capable of swapping some good for bad. I hope people can find a little bit of strength and hope vicariously through our experience.

Pru and Jude (see previous story)



Ask and know your loved one's donation wishes

donatelife

From death's door to the Wiggles and John Lennon

As Brent lay in a coma our family travelled from across the country to say their goodbyes, but Brent was to have another chance. The tragic end of one life gave him a new beginning when he received a donor liver—just in time.

Unlike most children who need transplants, Brent developed rare hepatitis very rapidly and without warning, which meant we and the hospital staff had to swing into action quickly. To find a suitable liver within 24–48 hours. This required a miracle and luckily —it happened.

Fast forward 15 years and Brent is now 18, has just finished secondary school and is contemplating his tertiary options. In the years leading up to now he has been predominantly fit and healthy. He has achieved academic success and enjoyed playing football in junior ranks, culminating in captaining under 14's into the finals. Unfortunately his smaller body and enlarged spleen made it too dangerous to continue against bigger bodies that had not been subjected to years of anti-rejection medication.

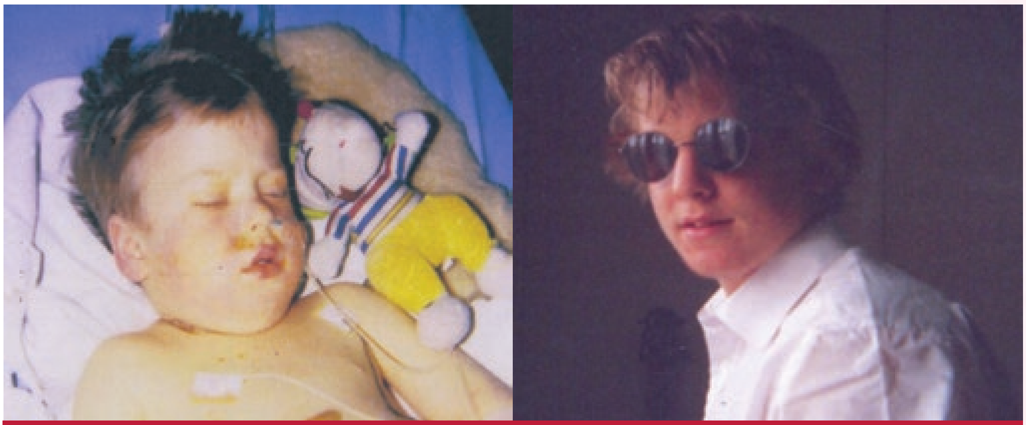
His childhood fascination with the Wiggles gave way to a love of the Beatles and in particular John Lennon. Brent has now taken up playing piano and wearing round sunglasses!

Brent's biggest adventure since his liver transplant was a snow skiing trip to Switzerland with other transplant kids from around the world—a trip he made without his mum and dad. His biggest concern about going to a foreign country alone was 'what do they eat over there?'.

Brent is a passionate member of the Richmond Football Club and attends games whenever possible, travelling to Melbourne on the train with his mates; a far cry from the very sick little boy with little or no chance of survival as I (his father) was told one dark, cold night.

None of this would have been possible without the gift of life given to Brent by a total stranger, someone that we have never known or ever forgotten.

Allan (Brent's father)



Brent before the transplant and Brent today

One organ and tissue donor can save or enhance the lives of 10 or more people.

donatelife

I always found a rainbow

I am 4 feet 8 inches but have a very outgoing personality. I have always known what it is like to be ill. It all started when I was 14 years old and I was rushed to hospital. I was in a very bad way with my health.

I had been diagnosed with peritonitis, which led to renal failure, heart failure and pneumonia. I remained in the hospital for about three months.

My kidney recovered somewhat, but I still required a transplant in the near future. Time and time again the doctors and nurses worked so tirelessly around the clock to save my life. I weighed 45kgs when I was admitted to hospital and when I was discharged weighed only 22kgs. I received my first renal cadaveric transplant when I was just 20 years old. I felt like a bird with new wings.

Nothing could stop me. I volunteered everywhere I could, went everywhere I could and had an amazing 17 years with my kidney.

After fostering two children, I contracted chickenpox and was hospitalised. My kidneys failed and once again hospital became my second home.

When I needed a second transplant my husband offered his kidney to me. We discovered that we were not a match. There was some sadness—but not for long. The doctors said they thought there was a way we could still do this although it would be very tough.

We went through with the treatment and my husband never faulted once.

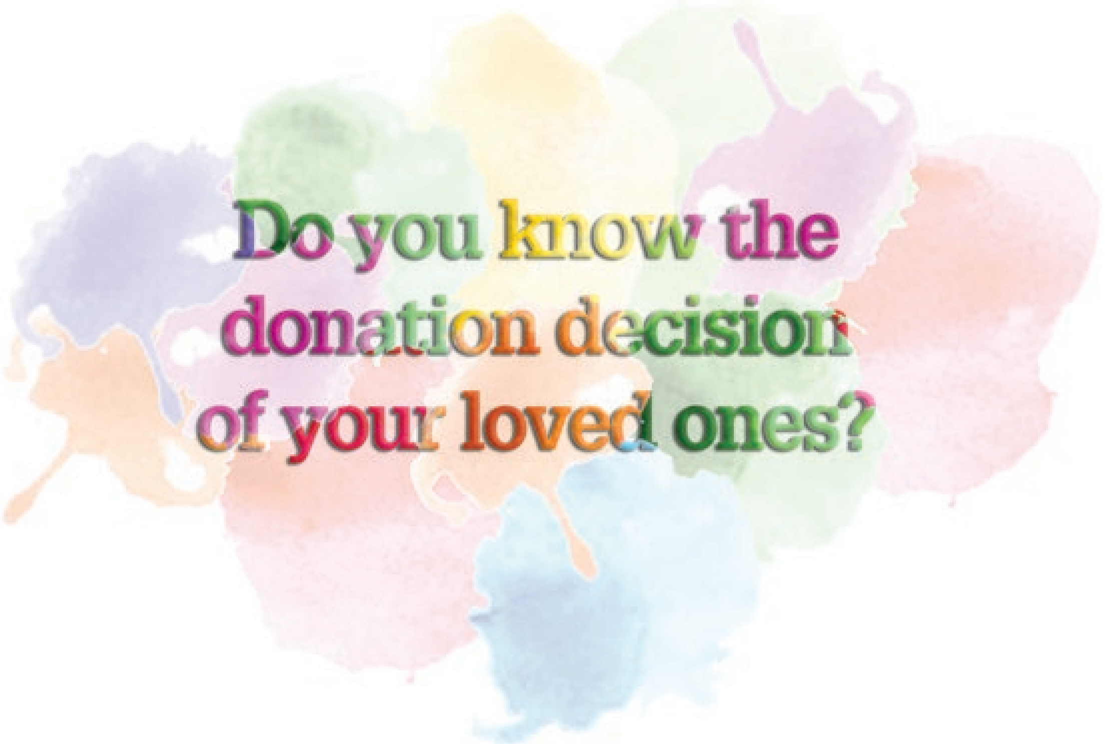
I had to receive dialysis and plasma exchange in order to change my blood group to match my husband's. After all the blood, sweat and tears you can see the difference straight away. My eyes were whiter and my skin clearer. I didn't feel nausea all the time either.

I am so lucky I have the doctors and I have and the loving support of my husband and friends. You see there will always be a mountain to climb, a river to cross, but it's how you go about it really. Look for the rainbow because it's there. I would not be the person I am today if I had not fallen so ill.

I appreciate the very small things in life, like the way every second counts and you will not get it back again. Do it now—not tomorrow. Tell people how you feel about them and don't take things for granted. From the bottom of my heart, thank you to all who have become organ donors—you are heroes!

Paula

Paula and Ian



Do you know the donation decision of your loved ones?

donatelife

One man did make a difference

I got the bad news on Father's Day, my dad had suffered a stroke. Three months earlier he'd had a triple bypass operation, so we knew it was serious. My dad lived on Elcho Island and had to be transferred to Darwin. Time went slow that day.

My mum was with my dad the whole time, while my brother and sisters made frantic arrangements to travel from interstate. The next day we got the tragic news that we would have to say our goodbyes.

The feelings and experience that followed are very personal and emotional. It was during this time our family was approached about organ donation. We agreed that's what our dad wanted and were comfortable with the decision. The only obstacle was time, as we wanted to ensure we all said our goodbyes in person.

I remembered a conversation with my dad, he'd said 'they can have whatever organs they want, they might not be much good but they won't be any use to me'. It was mentioned light-heartedly, yet I knew this was his wish. My parents had also discussed organ donation.

As fate had it my dad became an organ donor, donating his kidneys, lung and heart valves. It makes me proud that my dad's an organ donor and this has helped my family with the grieving process.

I have attended numerous organ donation ceremonies since, which is a special time for me to reflect and a chance to bond with other donor and recipient families.

My dad has always been my hero. Now he is some other people's hero too. I encourage anyone to become an organ donor, it is such a special gift to give. I miss my dad everyday, yet find comfort in knowing that he lives on in more ways than one.

Sadly missed, Mike

Register your donation decision on the Australian Organ Donor Register and make sure your loved ones know your decision.

donatelife

Pete's legacy

When a tragic skateboarding accident led to a midnight phone call, a trip to the local hospital, and a high speed ambulance transfer to hospital, we were met with the news that Peter was unlikely to survive his critical head injuries. Peter was placed on a ventilator and, as a CAT scan revealed, he had brain injuries which would probably be irreversible. We maintained a bedside vigil as his sisters flew and as family drove through the night to be by his side.

Peter's dream was to become a doctor or paramedic. He wanted to make a difference and save lives. He was an advocate for blood donation and as Captain of his High School he had instigated blood donation as the main focus of his year on the Student Representative Council. It was a natural progression when he gained his licence that he tick 'Yes' to the organ donation question on his licence. Peter had discussed it with me, his mum, in passing and asked if I was an organ donor and in an offhand manner I replied I was. We never really discussed it as I never really considered it likely to happen.

Peter died in the early morning, around 11 hours after his accident, of a heart attack caused by swelling of his brain and massive blood loss. This type of death in a country hospital prevented organ donation. We were doubly disappointed that his final wish to save lives was not realised.

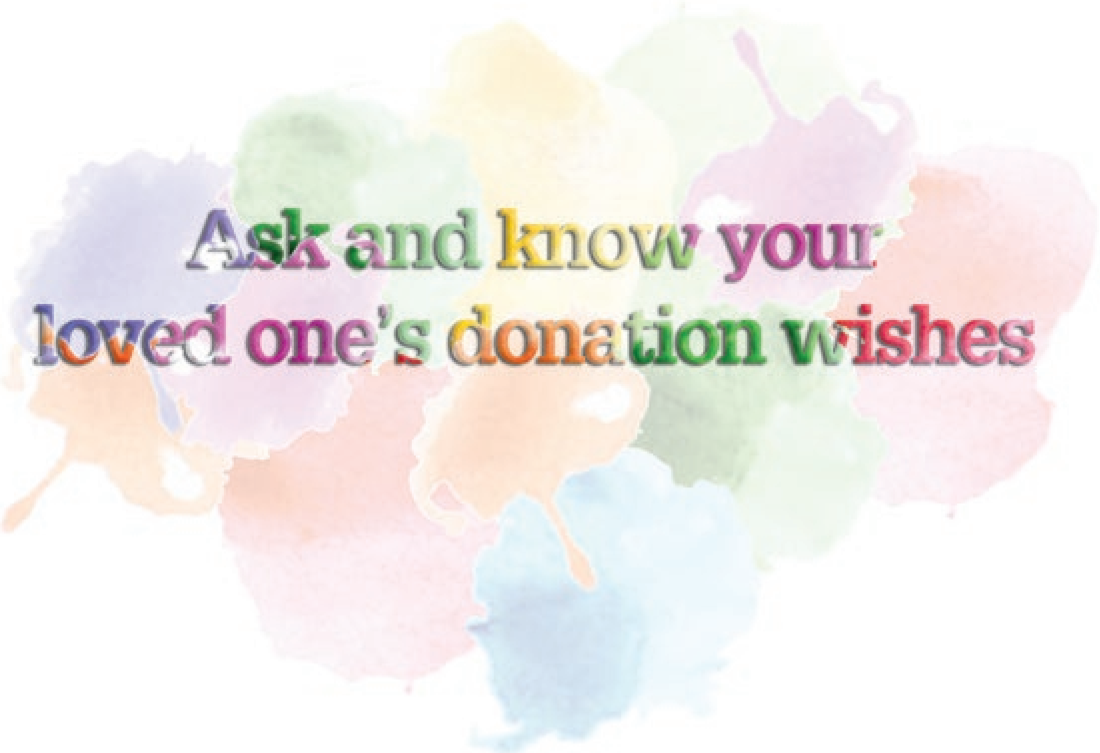
Today, however, Peter is saving lives through a special 'Be Positive 4Peter' group which anyone can access on facebook. Over 1500 new donors have signed on to donate on his behalf. The 42% increase in local donations which has in part contributed to the new and expanded service in Coffs Harbour.

The distress of lack of knowledge about organ donation has led to my interest in education about organ donation in schools. As the local teachers, students and Nurse Educators bring this program to the Valley, Peter's dream of saving lives will be realised.

We hope 2012 will bring the message to schools throughout NSW so that other families are able to fulfil the wishes of their family when they make the ultimate donation.

Kerri and Terry

Peter



Ask and know your loved one's donation wishes

donatelife

Simone has received and now she gives

Organ donation is the ultimate act of human kindness offering hope instead of despair to those awaiting a transplant. This unselfish act of kindness changed the quality of my life.

Born with poor kidney function I suffered renal failure at the age of nine and was hooked up to a dialysis machine to survive.

After waiting three years I received a kidney transplant thanks to the generosity of someone who made the selfless decision to donate the 'Gift of Life'.

My transplant took me from simply existing to living. It enabled me to finish school and go on to university graduating with a Bachelor of Laws degree at the age of 21.

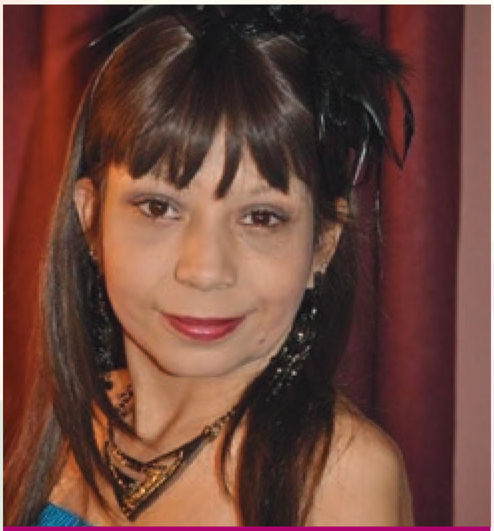
Following my transplant I embarked on a mission to promote organ and tissue donation in the community so, more people like me could experience that life changing impact a transplant has to offer.

After years of advocacy work, I was awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship. This enabled me to travel overseas to study international models of donation.

On returning from my fellowship, I founded the Organ Donation & Transplant Foundation of WA (ODAT) in 2008. ODAT provides education, promotion, support and advocacy on all aspects of Organ and Tissue donation in WA. Since becoming a DonateLife charter signatory in 2009, ODAT has achieved many great things for Organ and Tissue donation in WA through its programs and events.

Unfortunately last year, my transplanted kidney of 16 years failed and I am on dialysis awaiting another transplant.

To all organ and tissue donors and their families, I have to say you are special. Special is a word that is used to describe something that is one of a kind. So 'special' is a word that describes you best.



Simone, Executive Director ODAT and WA Young Australian of the Year 2006 and 2008

In 2011
337 organ donors gave
1001 Australians
a new chance in life

donatelife

DonateLife Book of Life

My family

Hi, my name is Shaun and I am 17. I like hanging out with my friends, the Bombers (Essendon Football Club) and girls—all pretty normal teenage stuff really. But my life hasn't always been that normal.

Here is my story.

I have had two heart transplants. Yes, two. When I was born I had a problem with my heart. By the time I was eight I couldn't run, I was tired all the time and I wasn't growing. The doctors said I needed a new heart. I didn't really understand why, but I cried with happiness when the doctor told me I would be able to play footy like the other kids.

One night about 11pm the hospital rang and said they had a new heart for me. I had an operation that lasted 14 hours and then I was given a new life at eight. I played my first footy game and I went swimming. I loved playing with the other kids and keeping up!

Nearly five years later, when I was 13, the doctors found another problem with my heart. My heart was not working again. But a second miracle occurred and I was lucky enough to have a second heart transplant. How can one person be so lucky?

That was four years ago now, and I am doing really, really, really well. When I finish school I want to be a nurse so I can help sick kids like I was—because I know what a big difference the nurses make.

I was chosen to be an ambassador for 'Heart Kids'—a support group specifically for kids with heart problems. As an ambassador I talk about my life and help them to stay positive.

I want the families that helped me to know that I am living life to the fullest for them and for me. My motto is stay positive, and never, never, never give up. You never know what tomorrow will bring.

Shaun

The most important thing that helps a family's decision is their knowing the donation decision of their loved ones.

donatelife

Thirty three years ago life was different

I clearly recall being asked to wait in a dimly lit waiting room whilst my parents were behind a closed door, engaged in discussions with the Doctor. My life was being discussed. The door opened, and I was told 'You may or may not need dialysis'. At 17 I was diagnosed with chronic renal failure.

I finished school, completed a Secretarial Diploma, achieved a Diploma of Dental Nursing, a Diploma in Registered Nursing, a Post Graduate Certificate in Nephrology Nursing and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

Rod and I married in 1984. To have children was not to be our future. Dialysis and kidney transplants were to be part of our future. Twenty five years of dialysis and three unsuccessful transplants made us ponder what life was all about.

But life is precious and the 'Gift of Life' is even more precious. One phone call took us by surprise. The decision to have a fourth transplant was not an easy one. Was this our last chance to hope for a 'normal' life? It was a chance we had to take.

This time there were no complications, eight years on and life is fantastic. No dialysis, the freedom to travel and enjoy holidays together. To participate in the Transplant Games, to meet very special donor families and living donors. To chat with other recipients and hear their own courageous journey is something I treasure.
To complete the Rottnest Island Channel Team Swim, with Rod kayaking beside us. To complete a solo swim across Princess Royal Harbour in Albany, with Rod at the finish line and so much more.

My life has been enriched through nursing. The opportunity to care for those who, just like me, continue their journey living with kidney failure has been an absolute privilege. And now my chance to enjoy retirement!

Yet throughout the highs and lows, the endless love, support, encouragement and inspiration from Rod, has given me the strength to keep going. Looking forward to each new day, having the strength to face a still uncertain journey, I struggle to find the words to express my innermost feelings of what it means to be given the chance to live a 'normal' life. To say Thank You will never be enough. I am at a loss to explain how it feels to be given such a gift, the chance to 'live' again.

This 'Gift of Life' has made my life complete.
33 years on and yes, life is indeed very different.

Robyn

In 2011
337 organ donors gave
1001 Australians
a new chance in life

donatelife

I always found a rainbow

Alex was just 19 years old when he died, as a result of complications with his Type 1 diabetes. He was having the time of his life, pursuing his dreams by studying to become an aeronautical engineer. His death was, for us, completely out of the blue. For someone who had been so alive and with so much living left to do, to be suddenly gone was, and still is, just impossible to believe.

Alex was a bright and outgoing person, with a huge sense of humour, who always saw the positives in every situation and was extremely loyal to his friends and family. Alex loved his sport, with a passion for basketball. The adrenalin fuelled way that he played on the court, was much like the way he lived his whole life.

Just two weeks before he died, while home from university for the holidays, Alex and his mum happened to hear a story about organ donation on the radio. When asked if he would want to donate his organs he replied, in true Alex fashion, 'Of course I would, but they wouldn't want my useless pancreas.'

This chance conversation meant that when the topic of organ donation was broached to us at the hospital, there was no decision for us to make. We could not believe the complete sense of joy that overcame us when we received news of the successful transplantation of four of Alex's organs. Thinking of the four lives saved, and four families who would not have to lose someone they love, brought great comfort to us at such a horrible time.

Hearing updates and receiving cards from the recipients of Alex's organs still brightens our days. We are reminded that while Alex may be gone, the gifts he was able to give have truly made such a difference to other people's lives.

Alex

On average, people on transplant lists wait between 6 months and 4 years.

donatelife

Brother and sister

It was the day of the surgery—a laparoscopic nephrectomy for me, Patti (then aged 55), and a kidney to be transplanted into my brother Mark then aged 45.

Mark had been on dialysis for 10 months as a result of high blood pressure. He had minimal energy, was in and out of hospital and was spiralling downwards into depression. My sister, Lyn, and I were tested and it came back that I was a six out of six—a perfect match.

People would ask if it was a difficult decision, but what had happened to my two brothers years earlier meant the decision was easy. My one remaining brother needed a lifeline. This was a very daunting thought for me—to be a healthy person putting their hand up to be opened up. I did a lot of research and prepared myself physically for the surgery.

I was operated on a Wednesday and left Westmead Hospital on the Friday.

Both Mark and I recovered well and Mark is a changed person with a renewed zest for living and a much greater attitude to life and work.

I kept a diary of the lead up as well as the barrage of testing, the transplant day and the days and weeks after for both Mark and myself.

I have written a book called Six out of Six which tells the journey for both of us. My target audience is anyone considering doing the same—to give hope to those on dialysis and to raise awareness of organ donation in general.

I am grateful for the grant I received from DonateLife to help with the book launch and for the display of materials from DonateLife.

Mark and his family are very appreciative of this second chance at life. If anything, I am more motivated to stay healthy, as I can't afford to get high blood pressure, diabetes or heart disease.

Patti

Patti and Mark promote organ donation

On average, people on transplant lists wait between 6 months and 4 years.

donatelife

Daniel

Daniel was diagnosed when he was eight weeks old, around November 1995. He was very sick as an infant. We had all of our treatment at the Mater Children's Hospital. That was our home for the next few months/ years on and off.

Daniel was eventually diagnosed with 'Finnish Type' Congenital Nephrotic Syndrome. This was very rare. Daniel needed albumin infusions until he was around two years old. He then went on medication to control his condition.

He went well with this for a number of years, until his kidney function started to deteriorate. In the meantime I met this wonderful man by the name of Phil (Daniel's step-dad). He supported us through everything, even staying with Daniel overnight on many occasions. We eventually all became one family.

Eventually his doctor decided it was time to do a transplant. I was worked up to donate a kidney for Daniel. However when the last test was completed the urologist found there was a problem with one of my kidneys. I could have donated but it would have meant a higher risk of rejection for Daniel. Phil said 'no, we can't have that' and put his hand up to be the donor. He had to go through a number of tests and psych meetings before he was allowed to donate. Thanking all the Gods above he was the same blood type as Daniel.

So the big day finally arrived. Phil was in the Adults hospital and Daniel was in the Children's. I had an anxious wait having both of them in theatre. Everything went very well. The kidney started working instantly. I am blessed to have met such a wonderful man in Phil to have done this for us. I will be forever grateful to him.

Daniel is now a healthy fourteen year old boy who is enjoying school, sport and being a teenager. Since the transplant he has been very healthy with no medical problems to date. This coming July will be nine years since the transplant.

Daniel loves soccer and cricket.

40% of Australians
do not know the donation
wishes of their loved ones.

donatelife

What a friend

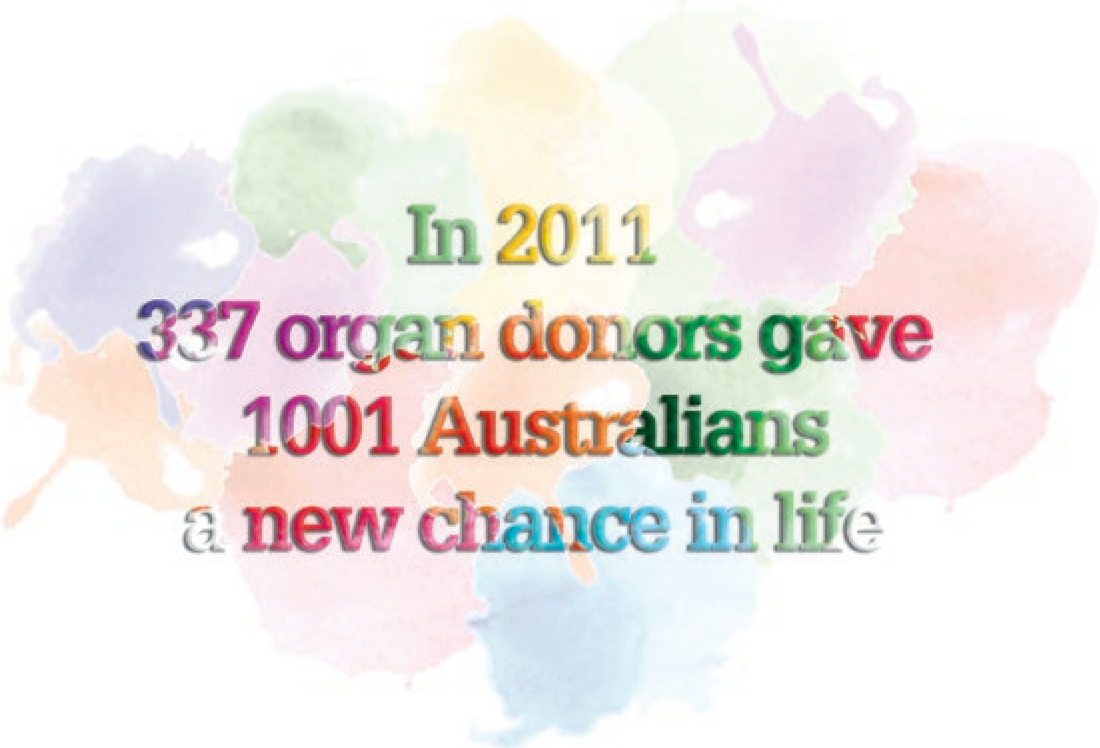
My wife started dialysis in 2002 when she also found that she was born with one kidney. After being on dialysis for two years her dearest friend started the process of being tested and was accepted as a suitable live donor.

The transplant was successful but the kidney was rejected after about six months. After the kidney was removed she was on dialysis for another three years. She received another transplant from an unknown donor.

This kidney lasted about nine months until it too was rejected and led to her death in 2010. During her time on dialysis we both managed to travel overseas and get treatment while we were on holidays.

Even though my wife died it was the skill and dedication of the hospital staff that kept her going for as long as she did. Please become an organ donor.

Martin



In 2011
337 organ donors gave
1001 Australians
a new chance in life

donatelife

DonateLife Book of Life

My son

My son passed away very suddenly. He died within 24 hours of a Grade V subarachnoid haemorrhage (a cerebral aneurysm). He left behind two children aged five and three, a wife, mother, father and sister who miss him greatly.

He was an organ donor and we have received two letters from the people that he gave his liver and kidney to. It is nice to know that both are doing well. It was a very hard call at the time but to know that he has saved the lives of two people is wonderful.

Thank you

Sue

Australia is a world leader for successful transplant outcomes.

donatelife

DonateLife Book of Life

Gail and Paul's story

Our story begins when Paul was nearly 19 years old. He was a big strapping fellow, just starting out in life.

He and his cousin travelled to Stuarts Point to visit their grandfather and to look for work. I received a phone call from Paul who said he couldn't see properly and his vision was blurry.

A few days later he had an eye test which showed something behind his eye. He was sent immediately to an eye specialist who confirmed what the optometrist had seen. His blood pressure reading was 190/140 which triggered alarm bells.

Paul's next step was an urgent trip to emergency. There he had various tests until he was diagnosed with kidney failure. We were all totally shocked and bewildered.

Doctors predicted he would need a kidney transplant within 18 months but, luckily, he managed eleven years. He then had to start dialysis five hours a day, three days a week. This took a terrible toll on his body. I was so devastated at this time because I couldn't help Paul.

Paul was placed on the transplant waiting list and every time the phone rang we were hopeful it meant a donated kidney. As five and then six years went by with no call, hope faded.

Paul was then told about ABO incompatible transplants (between different blood types) which had been carried out in Sweden for 25 years. Doctors here discussed the procedure with us. I didn't hesitate in agreeing to donate one of my kidneys. Paul was very ill at this stage and I wanted to give him the opportunity to have a normal life without being hooked up to machines.

Paul went to hospital three weeks before me for preparation. His antibodies had to be brought down so his body would not reject my kidney. Paul is O Positive and I am A Positive.

The operation was a complete success and now when I look back at it all seems like a dream. I prayed a lot and asked for a miracle to help my son.

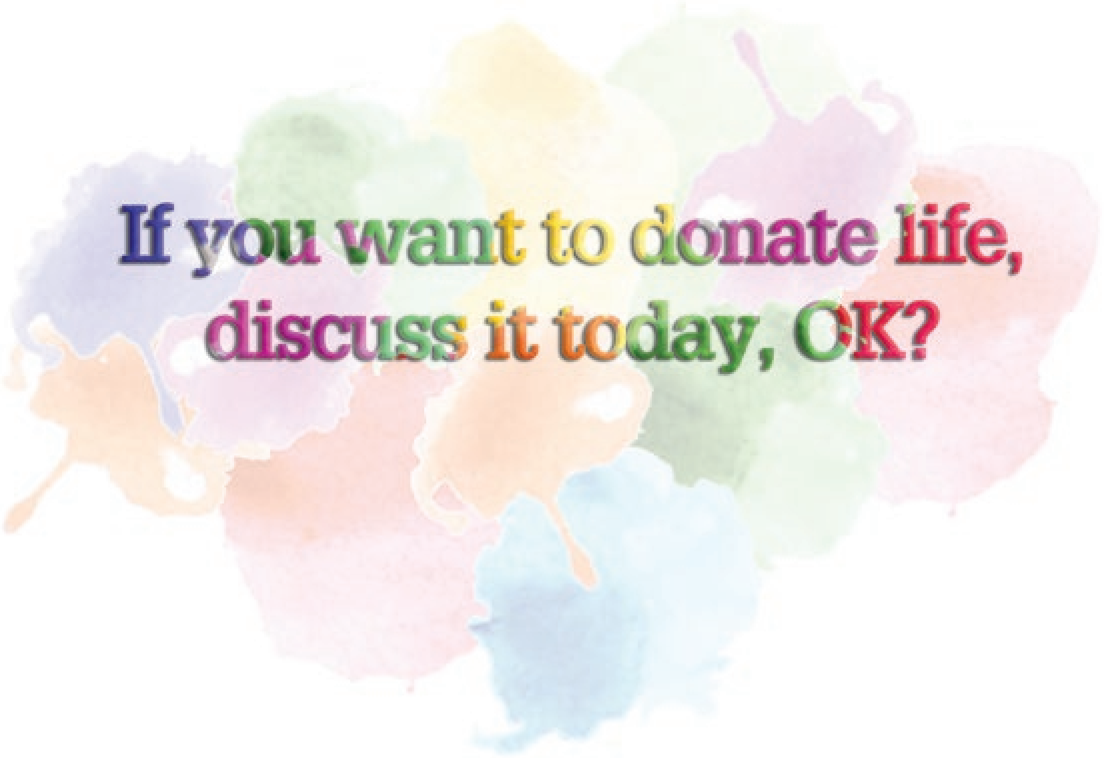
It is four years since the operation and things are going well. Paul is now doing all the things that healthy people take for granted. He now has a life with his two beautiful children; Harrison (four) and Annabelle (three).

We were so lucky I could help Paul.

Gail

So darling Mum,
There are no words in this world to say thanks for giving me life twice. Once 41 years ago and then four years ago with a new kidney. Thanks Mum. I love you heaps and you saved my life.

Paul



If you want to donate life, discuss it today, OK?

donatelife

Another chapter of life given

My story started 22 years ago, when I first noticed I wasn't well. At that time my wife had just given birth to a baby girl. Three months later I ended up in hospital on the liver transplant waiting list. I was waiting for two weeks, not knowing if I would receive a transplant, and given a 50/50 chance to survive another week.

A liver became available from a deceased donor and I didn't find out until the evening that I had been chosen for a transplant. I was nervous, saddened and exhilarated all at once. I remember being prepared for surgery and saying my farewells, with my wife crying and myself not knowing if I would see my family again.

I was wheeled down the corridor and woke up 12 hours later in intensive care. I did see my family again! I did have a few setbacks, but after six months of rehabilitation I was fit enough to come home.

Without the generous donation of a liver I would not be alive to see my wife and daughter, who is now 22 years old and has grown into a beautiful woman.

I thank the donor, whoever they were, and the hospital and staff for the loving care they showed my wife, daughter and myself over the six months I was there.

Thank you for your gift!

Terry

Any day is a good day to talk about organ and tissue donation.

donatelife

Gift of life

My Uncle Bruce passed away suddenly at just 49 years old. He adored his family and life. His other great love was his farm and his woodwork. He made the most amazing pieces of furniture and always loved his footy. His team was the West Tigers.

When we received a phone call that he was flown to hospital and was in the ICU, our life changed for ever. One day we are all doing our everyday things and the next we are sitting in the ICU being told that our precious uncle was brain dead.

I will never forget when we were asked about organ donation. I put my head up and I said NO. My Auntie turned to me and said 'you know he was an organ donor' and before I could even think my answer was OK.

At the time it was very hard to accept that he was a donor as I knew next to nothing about it. After the process of donation I became aware of what a precious gift he had given to five people.

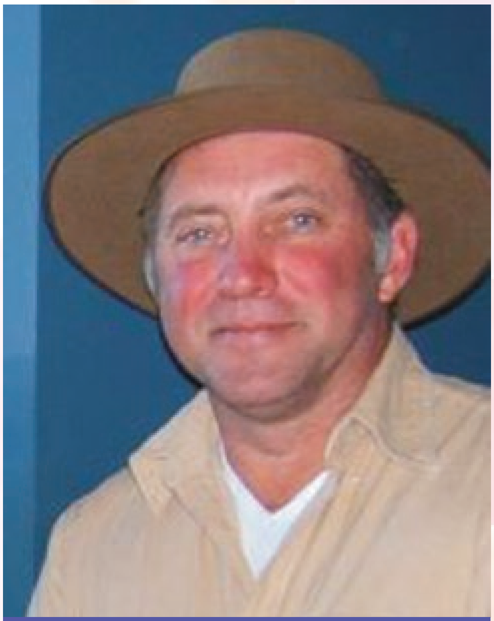
The support from the DonateLife team has been amazing and to have received a letter from each of his kidney recipients was beyond anything I can explain. After reading so many stories of the gift of life people have given, I am now an organ donor myself.

My uncle has gone but he lives on in these five people and that gift is something not many people can give.

He is my hero and always will be. Our family often think about the people he has helped and even saved. We wish the best of health for them and hope they have a long and happy life—thanks to Bruce.

Love you forever. Till we meet again. xxxx

Alisha



Bruce

Each year around
1,700 corneal transplants
are performed to give
the gift of sight.

donatelife

Jackson's hope

My son Jackson was a very positive person who was extremely loyal to his family and friends. His greatest love was paddling out in the ocean to enjoy a good surf. He was very protective of his family especially his younger brother. He could always put a smile on my face through his fun loving personality.

Jackson was 17 when his life was tragically cut short due to being a front seat passenger in a high speed car accident. His younger brother Rhyley was a passenger in the back seat when the car careered out of control and hit a power pole.

Rhyley kept his brother alive until the paramedics arrived. Jackson was then air lifted to hospital sustaining massive head injuries.

My two sons and I had spoken before about organ and tissue donation. Jackson had told Rhyley and I that he didn't want to stay alive on a life support machine and that he would like to donate his organs if ever anything like this happened to him. His attitude was 'they are no good to me if I ever die'. He knew that by donating he would be saving other people's lives.

In living and dying Jackson was never ever a selfish person. He was strong and young and healthy. He was also a rare blood type which meant that the recipients he saved were people that had a very slim chance of receiving these organs.

I am very grateful for having had discussions with my boys about organ donation. When asked about donating Jacksons organs I felt the decision was easy, at such a traumatic time, because I knew what he would have wanted.

Jackson has made me, his father, his brother, and our families so proud of him in his short life.

Wendy

Jackson

Less than 1 in 5 Australians have discussed in detail their donation wishes with their loved ones.

donatelife

DonateLife Book of Life

Mum's long struggle for breath

I feel that the sad stories need to be told as well as the successful and happy ones.

Mum was a 58 year old who had never smoked in her life. She loved the outdoors and her family. At the time of her death, her grandchildren were four and two. My twin sister and I were twenty-seven and our brother was nineteen years old.

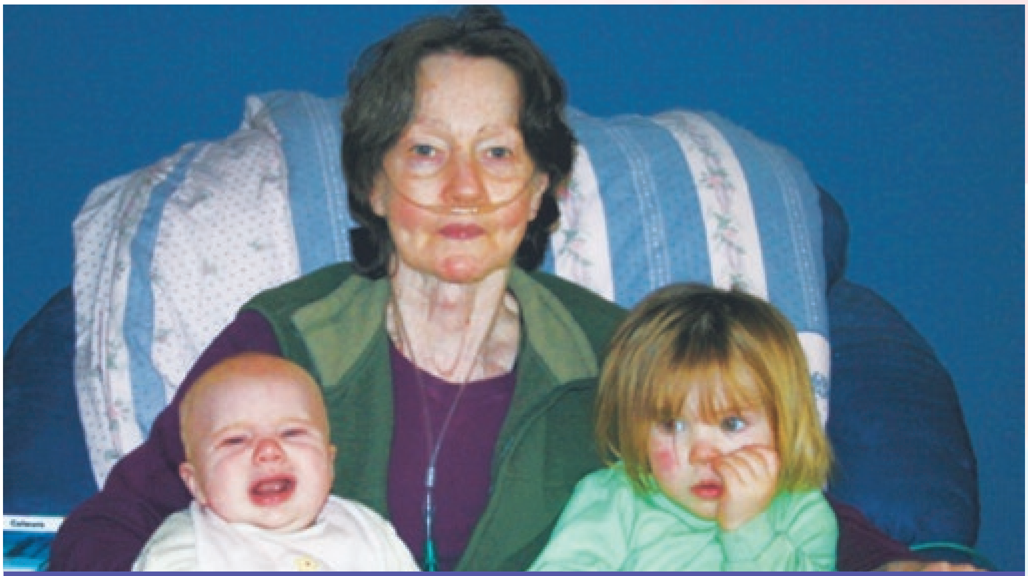
Six years ago, Mum had to quit work because of her shortness of breath. She went from being able to get out on her own, to only being able to get out with me (Leonie) – her carer.

Mum was placed on oxygen at home and after three months of going through tests she was placed on the organ transplant waiting list. We were told the average waiting time for Mum's lung size and blood group would be three years.

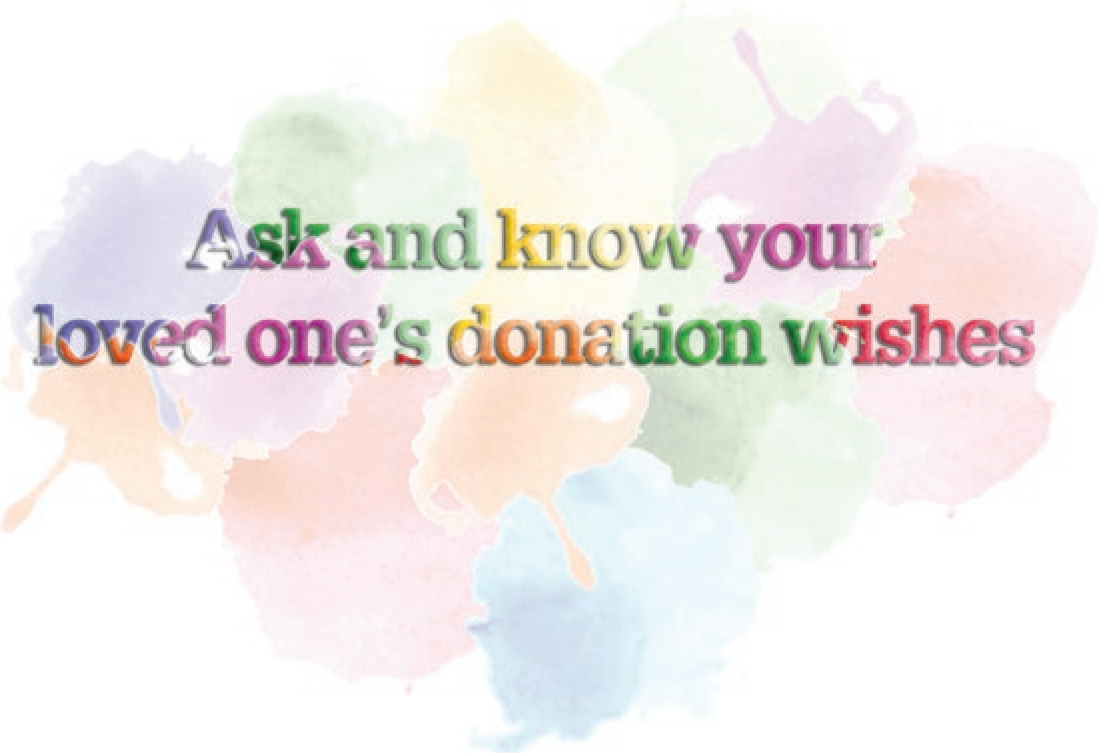
After numerous hospital stays and discharges, we expected Mum to come home to be with us. She was discharged a final time and came home on a Friday, only to be readmitted on Sunday. Mum was moved to ICU in a bigger hospital and decided that her five-year struggle had to end.

Mum was put on a ventilator (her wish) in the hope of removing excess CO2 from her blood stream. A week after trying everything we could, exactly two years and three months after being listed on the potential lung recipients list, we (her children) made the decision to turn Mum's ventilator off.

Leonie



Mum's meaning for life—her grandchildren



Ask and know your loved one's donation wishes

donatelife

DonateLife Book of Life

DonateLife Book of Life Volume 9

Australian Government
Organ and Tissue Authority

donatelife

Enquiries
If you would like to comment on the DonateLife *Book of Life*, or have any queries, please contact:

Organ and Tissue Authority
DonateLife *Book of Life*
PO Box 295
CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608

Phone: 02 6198 9800
Fax: 02 6198 9801
Email: enquiries@donatelife.gov.au
Website: www.donatelife.gov.au

Alternative format
The DonateLife *Book of Life* is available electronically on the Authority's website at www.donatelife.gov.au