

DonateLife

# BOOK OF LIFE

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

Volume 2







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

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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.

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6 February  
2011

Do the people close to you  
know your donation wishes?





# The joy of a transplant

I was the support person for my friend Diane after she was diagnosed with emphysema. Di was only in her late forties and it looked like she wouldn't see her 50th birthday.

I took her to her appointments, weekly or fortnightly, at the Prince Charles Hospital. The agony of walking beside her at a snail's pace and listening to her battle to breathe made me feel so useless. She was on the transplant waiting list for a double lung transplant.

Because of a loving, caring family who donated their family member's organs, Di was given the chance to make it to her 50th birthday and beyond. After an

operation that took over three hours, the surgeon came and told me that she had made it through ok.

Watching her begin the rest of her life after the transplant was a wonderful experience.

I cannot say enough about the donors, their families and the wonderful medical staff who make these dreams possible.

Everyone who can—PLEASE ADD YOUR DETAILS TO THE ORGAN DONOR REGISTER—You will help save a life and give new hope and dreams to so many.

Colleen



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



# Education helps family discussion and decision about organ donation

**B**rooke believes that having discussions on organ donation at school, with her family and when she went for her driver's licence made the decision a little less stressful on her family during the decision to donate.

'For me, it wasn't a hard decision to make. When I learnt about organ and tissue donation at school I decided that I wanted to be an organ donor and so I told my other family members my decision.'

Brooke was confronted with the sudden death of her mother, Shelley, following complications resulting from a stroke, when her mum was only 44.

When her family had discussed organ donation in the years prior to her sudden illness, her mother had told them of her wishes to be an organ donor.

When the pathway of organ donation was raised at the hospital, Brooke told her family that organ donation was important and that her mother had wanted to be an organ donor.

'We had a family discussion right there and then and we all agreed. Everyone wanted to honour mum's wishes to be an organ donor,' said Brooke.

'I'm glad we had that discussion because about three years later my grandmother died under a similar circumstance to my

mother, also quite suddenly following complications from a stroke.

'We all knew exactly what to do and organ donation was not a difficult issue for us. We knew that Nan wanted to be a donor because our family had discussed it', Brooke recalls.

Brooke says that her decision is validated each time that her family receive a letter (anonymously) from one of the recipients who are so grateful that their life has been saved through organ donation.

'Each year I go to the Annual Service of Remembrance and Reflection and I see what a difference organ donation has made to other transplant recipients, many of whom are children.

'I want to encourage families to have that important discussion and make sure that your wishes about organ donation are known. You too could save someone's life.'



Brooke and her sister Kristy.



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





# Simon

Thirty-six year-old Simon was a sculptor. He said, 'If you were to ask me where my passion comes from, I would tell you that it comes from my need to create art. There is so much that I find inspirational that I often cannot work fast enough to get it all out. I often have no idea where it comes from—I just make the most of it. Carving stone is incredibly healing, satisfying, challenging and necessary for me.'

Simon wasn't just my eldest son, he was my best friend. His spiritual nature and warmth meant he cared about the earth and the people on it, was willing to help those in need and generous with his time and resources.

He'd always been artistic—playing with a toy guitar at 18 months and later playing guitar, piano, didgeridoo, writing songs and singing. He studied art and design then teaching. He found his true voice when he took a stone carving lesson from a Maori artist.

'Most of what I have wanted to say in recent years has probably been better expressed through my sculpture. Words alone couldn't have said enough and I needed to learn a new language. This language comes from within and like any native tongue it feels natural', he said.

For the last 11 years of his life, Simon worked full time as an artist—gradually building up a portfolio of work and exhibiting in Australia and New Zealand.

Large commissions started coming in and his work now graces establishments including Hilton on the Park, the Crown Casino and the Women's and Children's Hospital along with many businesses and homes.

Simon didn't take anything for granted. He was a huge giver in life—of his heart and his time so it stands to reason he'd be a giver of life in death.

Maureen



Simon and his sculpture *The Tree of Life*

Australia is  
a world leader  
for successful  
transplant outcomes



## Colleague's life saved

**M**y work colleague suffered from kidney failure. Each day she came to work looking weaker and more jaundiced.

I asked her about her situation. She told me she had suffered for most of her life and that she would get progressively worse. She had been on a transplant waiting list for many years.

She needed to live in the city to be close to hospitals, should she get a call regarding a donor. She felt she could not visit her family who lived interstate nor

go on a holiday in case the call came. One morning, commuting to work, traffic was particularly heavy. On the radio they advised of a road accident involving a fatality. The traffic jam was more newsworthy than the tragic loss of life or its consequences.

On arrival at work I received a message advising me my colleague was in hospital—but it was good news. Her kidney had arrived.

John





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





# Donor a life-saver

## Dad's chance to play again

Mill's daughter Katrina can't remember a time when her dad was unable to play with her.

Katrina, now nine, was less than two months old when her father received the life-changing gift of a new kidney.

Before that, Mill required more than four hours of dialysis three times a week, with his kidneys working at barely 10 percent efficiency.

Now, thanks to a donated organ, the 47 year old from Brighton has a new lease on life. His renewed energy has allowed him to play tennis with his daughter and even to take up cycling.

When he was about 25, Mill was diagnosed with a kidney disorder and at 40 he was put on dialysis and the transplant waiting list.

'By then, there was about 10 per cent (kidney) efficiency left,' he said.

'I could still function, but I got tired...and I just found I had no energy left.'

Told he would have to wait up to three years for a new kidney, after five months

on dialysis he received the call he was waiting for.

'So I was one of the lucky ones, and am very thankful to my donor and donor family.'

Mill said it was important for families to discuss organ and tissue donation.



Katrina and Mill.

Courtesy: Leader Community Newspapers, Melbourne. Story: Andie Awadalla. Picture: Jason Summion

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



## Shining stars

### Our special donor family and transplant team

**A**t age forty-five, Mal's life and our family's were changed forever overnight. His once healthy heart could hardly function. We were devastated.

A few years later, our lives were again changed forever, through the unique experience of transplantation. Lengthy deliberation ensued before Mal made the decision to accept this path, but nothing can prepare you for that phone call.

This was a tumultuous time. It was a journey that has been very special and a privilege to have experienced. A journey of conflicting emotions. For our family, renewed hope and a second chance of life. For our special donor family, intense grief at suddenly losing their loved one. Our feelings were indescribable. This precious new heart was the ultimate, most caring and generous gift of life that could be given to a stranger. We will remain eternally grateful to them.

We needed to give something in return. Our goals were to acknowledge and thank our donor family and our transplant team, and to raise awareness of the need for organ and tissue donation. The Cycle of Giving event has been able to expand with the love and support of valued family and friends. Now in its sixth year, a grant from the Organ and Tissue Authority has enabled a continuing dream to be fulfilled.

Whilst all too short, Mal's second chance of life proved to be an extraordinary time. Through participation in the

Australian and World Transplant Games, another close and supportive family was established. Mal set up and co-ordinated the archery program for the 2006 Australian Games. Despite being very sick, he won medals and was elated to score a bull's-eye! He was humbled and surprised to receive the Clifford T Henderson Award. This recognizes the one who most embodies the spirit of the games, through courage and inspiration.

When faced with a diagnosis of terminal cancer our immediate thoughts were for others. For our transplant team, their dedication and skills which enabled a second chance of life were going to be prematurely cut short. We felt acute grief for their impending loss. Our own loss seemed secondary.

I hope to perpetuate this expression of our eternal gratitude through the Cycle of Giving – Give a Gift of Life. I have Mal's firm and loving hand guiding me on this continuing path.

Mary



Magnificent Mal 239



Australia is  
a world leader  
for successful  
transplant outcomes





## Brad's life back on track

Our 31-year-old son Brad was suddenly diagnosed with end stage kidney failure. You soon learn what faces you, dialysis, transplant or death. Brad commenced haemodialysis in hospital, then opted for peritoneal home dialysis. It was impossible for him to work as hospitalisation and being hooked up to a machine for 10 hours per day seven days per week ruled his life.

As a family we were told there would possibly be a five to seven year wait for a deceased donor transplant. We decided to offer Brad a better quality of life and see if we were compatible as living donors. The transplant team chose me, his father.

The living transplant took place in April. This was both successful and rewarding. Brad was back in full time work six

months later and I went back to work after two months. We are both well at the moment and must commend the hospital and medical teams for their support which still continues to this day. Both my wife Lynda and I have since registered on the Australian Organ Donor Register as we realise in death our organs will be of no use to us, but may be used to help someone in need.

We are actively promoting the Australian Organ Donor Register and will continue to do so until we pass on. Don't wait till it's too late. We encourage all Australians who are not on the Register to come aboard, as others in need will continue to face our situation in the future.

Lyall



Brad and Lyall



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





# Eyes see all!

**M**y name is Melissa and I consider myself to be very fortunate. I was diagnosed with a corneal disease, Kerataconus, 23 years ago at the age of 21. I was told then that should my condition deteriorate I would require a corneal graft, 'though we don't do many of those'.

In my late thirties I was devastated to learn that I was 'technically blind'. As my condition was a gradual, slow deterioration, I had no idea how impaired my vision really was, I just adjusted. I had a young daughter, did office work and lived life, unaware how serious my condition had become.

My name was immediately added to the list, as a corneal graft was my only option. A very daunting thought! I am fortunate to have been the recipient of two beautiful donor corneas.

I remember my first real venture back into the world of sight. It was one morning and I looked out the window. I could see veins on leaves, specks on concrete, tiles on roofs and I could see for a mile (well I thought so anyway) – I broke down! I wanted to tell the world that I could now see its beauty in its entirety.

There is mixed feelings associated with being a tissue recipient. There are feelings:

Sadness—you are aware someone else has passed to enable you to have the gift of sight.

Gratitude—to those who made the ultimate decision at such a difficult time in their life.

Thankfulness—to my donors for giving me a gift which will always be remembered

I have learned that since being diagnosed with a corneal disease, the reason not many grafts were performed was that there was no medium to store the cornea until transplantation. Over the years such a storage medium has been developed.

It has been seven years since my last graft and I recently visited my wonderful ophthalmologist, who is very pleased with my progress. I love my glasses, love life and will always be grateful for my very precious gifts.

Melissa.

**Donors and recipients  
vary in age from  
infants to the elderly.**





# A long wait

**M**y kidney disease came out of the blue. One day at work I began to feel unwell and I decided to go home. Not long after I started to lose all sense of direction and balance, then collapsed.

My body was shutting down. My brain and heart blew-up and my left side became paralysed.

A few days later a friend found me at home and rushed me to hospital. My heart stopped multiple times before the doctors were able to pinpoint what was happening.

I basically died three times over. I deteriorated really rapidly and so much damage was done in such a short time.

After a week in Intensive Care, I started to improve. After months of tests, I was diagnosed with kidney disease caused by a viral infection and I would need a transplant. Then the long wait began.

For the next eight years I travelled to the dialysis unit every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday to be hooked-up for four hours to a blood-filtering machine that did the work my failing kidneys couldn't.

While on dialysis I couldn't plan anything, go anywhere, or enjoy a regular lifestyle. My life was on hold.

It was a long time to be waiting. Everyone around you seems to get a transplant and nothing is happening. You also see many people die. You start to worry.

Then the phone call came to say I would receive a donor kidney. I was actually two hours into my treatment and still on the machine when they told me. I didn't know what to do, but they said 'well get off, they need you now.'

That was nine months ago and I started feeling the difference almost instantly after transplant.

After a couple of days, you notice the difference. You start feeling better within yourself. No more dialysis, I regained mobility, and started to plan things.

I have no doubt how much the donor organ changed my life. People who donate organs are true champions. It gives people a new lease on life.

If you're thinking about it, don't think, just go and do it. Being able to give someone a second shot at life is the greatest gift you could ever give.

You get through the first six months, then you think about the next 12 months, then the next five years. Anything now seems possible.

Mick

Each year around 1700  
corneal transplants are  
performed to give  
the gift of sight



## A child's donation

**M**y eight-year-old daughter Georgia fought a hard battle for nearly two years with a brain stem tumour. Georgia was given a six to 12 month survival prognosis. This tumour attacks children usually between the ages of five and nine years of age.

The day we all never wanted came, and Georgia passed away in January. The thing about Georgia was she was still functioning as a normal child. Playing football, going to school and doing everything a normal child would do. That was our true miracle. Most children end up in wheelchairs—unable to talk, eat, walk and eventually go blind. We were so lucky.

The tumour was removed. Most of the tumour was sent to the USA while some

went to the research centre here in Australia.

We were so positive about donation. When we received the results back from the tumour, I went through a very negative patch for a few months.

Thankfully I have come through this and now believe that this was the best thing we could have done. I want to say to others in the same situation, donate tissue if you cannot donate organs. A cure for disease will only be found if you can do this.

Good luck to everyone embarking on this difficult life journey.

God bless  
Maggie—Angel Georgia's mum



Forever eight.



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





# I'm one of the lucky ones

I'm one of the lucky ones, and thanks to my wonderful donor family I'm alive!

About four years ago my health started going downhill. After seeing several doctors and having a barrage of tests I was advised I had a rare liver disease and that a future transplant was my only option.

The specialists had numerous predictions about how long I had but within a year it was obvious the transplant was needed much sooner than expected.

I was referred to the Austin Hospital Liver Unit where I was placed on the waiting list. I was very scared because there are no guarantees and with the number of others in the same situation the prognosis wasn't looking good.

It took nearly two years of waiting and by this time my family knew that without a transplant soon, the end was only a matter of weeks away. At this point the

toxins were no longer filtered by my failing liver and had built up so much that I was too unwell to know what was happening.

I don't have a memory of the 12 months leading up to my eventual transplant. I had lost the ability to read and write, couldn't remember how to cook or do even the most basic of tasks that most of us take for granted.

Here I am now, some fourteen months later, and I'm healthy, happy and enjoying my life once again. Words really don't seem enough when expressing gratitude to my donor family. How do you thank someone enough for giving you back your life?

I urge everyone to become an organ donor. There are just so many people who need your help.

Maureen



Maureen.

Do you know the donation wishes of your loved ones?



## My husband's story

**M**y name is Tracy and two years ago my husband died suddenly and unexpectedly from an aneurysm in his brain. At the time we had a three month old baby and a 20 month old toddler—two gorgeous boys who would grow up never knowing the father that loved them dearly.

Both Sean and I had spoken about organ donation and knew each other's wishes—so when the nightmare unfolded it was a relief to be able to convey his wishes and subsequently save six lives without the turmoil of making another decision. This was the one part of the day where I felt I actually made the right decision—one that I knew he wanted.

Sean was always full of life and made sure he lived every minute. He tried to take every opportunity he could and he would be so happy to know that he was able to save lives and give others a second chance. I will certainly be sharing his heroism with his sons when they are old enough to understand.

I thought I would share my husband's story so that others may also make their wishes known and hopefully become organ donors. There is no greater gift than the gift of life.

Tracy





**Organ and tissue donation  
for transplantation is based  
on the concept of altruism.**





# From one brother to another: Kelvin's kidney donation

**M**y story begins with the declining health of my youngest brother Roger, the youngest of eight siblings. He was a dairy farmer with six kids of his own and was fit and healthy at 35 years old. It came as a shock to find out that his kidneys had failed him and he had become dialysis dependent.

From day one I offered to be a living donor for him, if ever that time came. For the first two years he tried peritoneal dialysis until his nephrologist told him he was deteriorating and needed a transplant. Roger is a guy who is too proud to ask for help. But this was a situation he could not get through on his own. He needed a kidney—I've got two—so I decided I was going to give him one of mine!

I went to the nephrologist to see if he thought I was capable of a donation. He gave me the OK. The next six months were a constant array of blood tests, MRIs and angiograms. Although this was annoying at times, these tests were needed to determine which kidney was best to take, and how healthy they were. Everything was fine, and a date was set for the transplant.

Leading up to the operation I felt confident that things would go well. I was quite nervous and scared on the morning of the operation, but the nurses were fantastic and put me at ease. The operation was keyhole surgery. The pain after the operation was managed with medication. I was out of hospital four days after the operation and went back to work after five weeks.

I set myself the goal of running the Burnie Ten four months after the operation, and that was achieved. This gave me the confidence to get back into playing football again, with extra padding of course, the following year.

Now nearly three years on, my body is feeling great, I have had no complications at all and feel no different than I did before the operation. Roger's new kidney is also doing well, so it has been a success so far, and one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. My wife Megan was a constant support for me through all of this and I can't thank her enough.

Kelvin

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



# ANGLs in Kokoda

Late on a Sunday night my family and I returned home to a missed call from a Sydney number. Curiously, my mother phoned it back.

On the other end of the line was the liver transplant co-ordinator advising us to make our way to hospital immediately. By miracle an amazing family had agreed to donate their loved ones organs in a time of tragedy and my father was to soon be the recipient of a much needed liver.

He had been on the transplant waiting list for less than six months suffering with sclerosing cholangitis that had caused end stage liver failure. He was 45 years old at the time.

The wait for my father and our family was extremely emotional. From watching his clear deterioration every day, his increasing lethargy and regular check ups to ensure he was still suitable for a liver transplant, we all lived in fear that the call may not come in time. In the last few weeks before dad's transplant, he was so fatigued he had taken leave from work and we all held our breath every day, cried every night and hoped that a miracle would soon happen.

After Dad received the liver transplant we were glad to see that he had made it. At the same time though, we were conscious that a family somewhere had just farewelled their loved one. It was also tragic to watch other patients that were on that same waiting list. Before our eyes they deteriorated, never receiving a phone call and adding to the numbers of those who never made it. Watching the sorrow and grief in their families eyes as they packed away their possessions and said goodbye,

we couldn't have been more thankful for the gift of life to our family but still saddened by what could have been.

Now almost 10 years on, the events of that night and the following few days remain vivid in my mind. I am amazed that people around me still have a poor understanding of organ donation. Many when asked state 'yes' they are potential donors. When I ask if their family are aware, they have never discussed it!

To try and help raise awareness for organ and tissue donation, I am attempting to complete the Kokoda Trail with some of my nursing colleagues. I aim to do my part in paying respect to the family that gave my family so much and to increase current donor rates. I also hope to reach other Australians and ease their wait, like that which my father and our family went through.

My life would not be what it is today if I had to prematurely farewell my father—as I realise many other families have had to do. Get on board and talk about organ donation with your family—I can't encourage you enough.

Sheree



Some of the Aussie Nurses Giving Life (ANGLs)



**Organ and tissue donation  
for transplantation is based  
on the concept of altruism.**



## A new start to life

**A**t the age of 23, I was diagnosed with liver cancer, and told I only had three to six months to live. After lots of chemotherapy I then had liver resections, and the doctors realised my only option for survival was a liver transplant because the tumors just kept coming back.

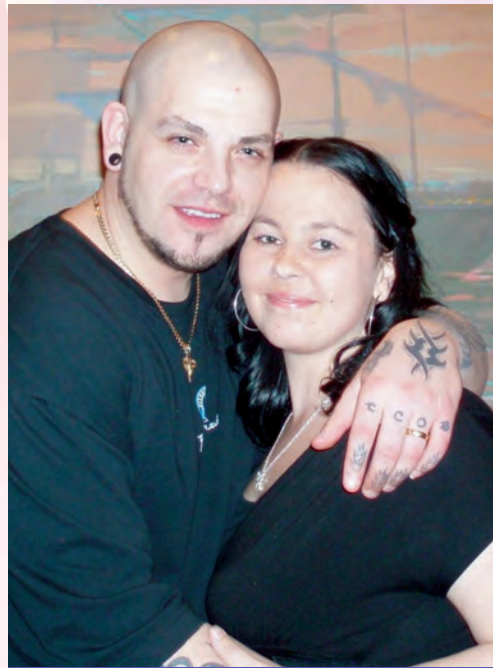
I was put onto the liver transplant waiting list. It was a matter of waiting and not knowing whether a liver was going to become available or not—my life became a waiting game.

I got the call that was going to change my life forever. On the way into the hospital I was happy but also so sad for the donor's family. I was unhappy they were going through such a hard and sad time after losing their loved one. I will never take this precious gift for granted.

All I remember when I woke up was that this was the start to my new life. All the things I can now do after recovery! My dream of being a mother is more likely to come true now and there will be no more stress on my husband and parents.

Now I have been given a new start, I am going to make the most of it. A part of my donor will always be a part of me, and every year I will be lighting a candle on my transplant anniversary to remember my donor.

Kristy



My husband and I.

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





# Gift of Life

I will never forget the day we were given the news. I was with Alan, my fiancé at that time, at a specialist appointment. We were there because he had been having some pain on the right side of his abdomen. We had been waiting two weeks to find out what was wrong with him. Blood tests and an ultrasound had shown there was something wrong with his liver but the doctors weren't quite sure what.

We were totally unprepared for the news we received—Alan had been diagnosed with an extremely rare form of liver cancer. Chemotherapy and radiotherapy didn't work on this type of cancer. The only option was a liver transplant. We went into total shock. How could this happen to us? How could my fiancé have cancer? He was only 28! What were we going to do? What was going to happen?

We had to quit our jobs, say goodbye to our friends and pack up our lives in only a week. The next few months were a blur of specialist appointments, scans and the horrible pain that comes with the uncertainty and the disbelief of what was happening to us.

When the day finally came for Alan to have his transplant it was a mixture of happiness, relief and also fear of the outcome of the operation. It was a tense 10 hour wait for our family and friends but when we finally got the news that the operation had been a success we all broke down, sobbed and cried. Seeing him so weak and in pain was also very hard. I wanted all his pain and this nightmare to be over with.

Luckily, Alan had youth on his side and in a matter of weeks he was out of the hospital and had a new lease on life. Six months on he was fit, healthy and strong. One year later we were married and he was able to start a new job.

Alan's life and our lives together were given back to us through the generosity, selflessness and thoughtfulness of another. We and our family and friends will be forever grateful and thankful for the truly special and amazing gift that Alan received. It saved his life.

Josephine



Alan and Joesphine on their wedding day.

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



## Emma's story

**W**hat a journey our little daughter Emma has had in her 18 months of life. Born with Biliary Atresia there was no other option but a liver transplant.

She deteriorated very quickly and she was listed for transplant aged five months.

We moved our whole family to another state for the transplant and my husband, who is a medical student, made the difficult decision to postpone his studies.

Emma was seriously ill and we were all so worried for her. One day I was sitting with her while doctors again tried to take blood from her with no luck, watching her cry tears that were stained yellow from the liver disease and at that point, I almost gave up hope.

Later that night we got 'the call' that Emma was going to get a second chance at life.

That day, to us, is the 'real' start of her life. Her transplant went very well and we watched her slowly get stronger and stronger and before we knew it she was back home!

That first night back at home was such a relief—we could actually fall asleep not wondering if we would be taking her to Emergency that night or not!

We have been very blessed that her transplant was a success and she is recovering well but the biggest blessing of all has been the incredible gift that a selfless family has given to complete strangers.

At a very difficult and emotional time, a family that we will never know has changed our family's life forever.

We have been registered organ donors for a number of years, but I never, ever imagined someone in my family would need that precious gift!

Emma did not have any hope of surviving her first year if not for her donor. Please consider organ donation.

Emma's mum



Emma before and after her life-saving transplant.



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



# My brother

**A**s a kid growing up in a small town, Kerry was not only my big brother, he was also my mate and someone I looked up to. Our friendship became even stronger when we were playing sport together.

When I first found out that Kerry was sick with lung disease, I didn't think anything of it at the time. I thought that with a few medications he would get well again and things would be back to normal.

However things were to take a different turn with the realisation that he was never going to get better—only worse. I was at Kerry's place every day, assisting both him and his wife with everyday chores that he was unable to perform. I was his window to the outside world, a shoulder for his wife to lean on and support when the going got tough.

His illness brought us even closer, although I missed the person that he used to be. I missed being able to do the things that we had once done, laughing at a silly joke, going to a footy match and even going out for dinner.

Words still fail me if I try to describe how I felt when the call came through to tell us that he was going to get his life-saving lung transplant. I had given up hope that it was ever going to happen.

Life since his transplant continues to be surreal. We are closer now than we ever were—spending time together, and enjoying life because we know how close he came to not being here.

I am forever grateful to my brother's donor family for their selfless act. Without them I would not have my brother here today. Thank you so much.

lan



Kerry and lan

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





# Walking on water

**A**t birth, I was premature, breach, unable to pass urine and unable to breathe without assistance. I had a condition known as Posterior Urethral Valves. The doctors gave my parents two choices; one was to turn off the life support and let me die and the other was an operation that might prolong my life for two months. Mum told them 'we are going to pray for a miracle' and my parents told the doctors to go ahead with the operation.

After six weeks I was able to go home for the first time. At one year old I had my left kidney removed as it didn't function at all. I couldn't go to the toilet naturally until I was five and had reconstructive surgery on my bladder. I can still remember going to the toilet for the first time.

I had many trips to the hospital for check-ups and minor operations. At age 12, I began getting serious infections in my kidney as my bladder muscles were too weak to fully drain. Doctors performed an Appendicovesicostomy which is an operation to create a stoma from my appendix to drain my bladder.

At 16 and studying Year 10 at school, my kidney function fell rapidly. I lost a lot of weight fast and remember lying awake every night thinking I was going to die. Both of my parents were compatible, however Mum decided to be the donor so Dad could stay and work the family dairy farm.

Mum had the five hour operation. The next day I woke up and even though I was unable to move, I felt well. I had never known what it was like to feel well until that day. The new kidney had almost instantly started to function and functioned fully within days.

I had a year off to fully recover and just enjoy myself. I surfed and fished almost every day. I had a very close encounter with a 2.5 metre shark going under my board. Then I joined the surf life-saving club and trained with them for about four months. I did weight training and went running every day and became very fit.

My neighbour had a heart attack and asked me to mow the lawn while he recovered. I discovered I was very good and very fast at it and I loved working with plants. I started a lawn mowing and gardening business, which I still own and run today. I have been quite successful with it and have gone on to study Certificate III in horticulture.

I still surf, fish and ride motor bikes every chance I get and I thank God every day.

I love life...

Nic

Ask and know your  
loved one's donation wishes









**Australian Government**  
**Organ and Tissue Authority**

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The *DonateLife Book of Life* is available electronically on the Authority's website at [www.donatelife.gov.au](http://www.donatelife.gov.au)

