

DonateLife BOOK OF LIFE

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





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.

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



Thank you

This is a special 'Thank you'.

My name is Brad I am 47 years old and when I was six years old I was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes.

I had a normal life with a loving family and then my wife Lorae and I went to live in Bateman's Bay on the south coast of NSW.

In the mid 1990s the effects of Type 1 Diabetes started affecting my health. I was diagnosed as legally blind and a month later commenced dialysis.

In 2001 I had my right big toe amputated. Then my left big toe was amputated and following a slight stroke, my left leg was amputated at Canberra Hospital.

One day after my regular dialysis treatment I had a phone call. There was a kidney-pancreas waiting for me at Westmead Hospital, donated by a family who knew the wishes of their loved one.

After 32 days in hospital, I returned home return to a normal life and I have been able to watch my family grow. I will never ever forget the gift that saved my life—from a family I shall never meet, but love and respect as my own.

However, due to the damage caused by Type 1 diabetes my right foot and then leg was amputated below knee.

In August 2007 we established the Eurobodalla Renal Support Group and Organ Donor Awareness and Education.

We are dedicated to providing community awareness about kidney health, organ donation and transplantation on the NSW South East. We also host community events and meet regularly at 'get-together' lunches.

Without strong support and love from my family and a wonderful and generous donor family somewhere in Australia who had the very important talk about organ donation, I would not be alive today. There is just one thing left to say—'thank you'.

Brad



Brad and Lorae.

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



Twice as lucky

Hi, my name is Michelle. Unlike most transplant recipients I enjoyed a life full of health and fitness right up until I ruptured my liver from a hard fall during a game of sport. A freak accident.

A week after initial surgery, my liver suddenly failed and I was in real trouble. My only chance of survival was an urgent liver transplant—ideally within 24 hours. As time ran out, I received a liver that was not particularly healthy but it kept me alive long enough to receive a second liver two days later. Upon waking, finding out I had two liver transplants was the biggest surprise of my life, and it has also been my source of life for nearly ten years now.

After the transplants I slowly recovered with a few ups and downs and more daytime TV than I could imagine. But before long, I was back working, studying, riding my bike, swimming and enjoying good health and a full family life once again.

My greatest joy came in 2007 with the birth of our daughter Amelia—two days before the fifth anniversary of my transplants. Being a mum makes me even more appreciative of the amazing gift I have been given. I also have a wonderful partner, Jo, who was a tower of strength when I was ill and continues to exude optimism for the future.

None of this would be possible if two special donors and their families had not acted selflessly and courageously to agree to organ donation. I was incredibly lucky to receive two donated organs in three days, but many others are not as fortunate as me and will die waiting for a transplant.

My donors and their families are often in my thoughts and meeting other donor families is always special for me. I truly hope my donor families gained some comfort from knowing that the generosity of their loved one made such a life-giving difference to me and my family. Please consider organ donation and make your wishes known to your family. Many lives depend on it.

Michelle



Michelle with her daughter Amelia.

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Double or nothing

Being diagnosed with lung disease was initially something that shocked me. I still led an active life, involved in work and numerous sports. Deterioration of my lung capacity down to 6% meant that I was eventually placed on the transplant waiting list. I was no longer able to do the things which I had previously taken for granted. I required constant support from my family for simple tasks, which took a toll on everyone. Without the support of my wife and brother, life was an existence.

Getting that midnight phone call was both a relief and exciting. It took a while to gather our thoughts and understand that this opportunity was actually happening. Everything was surreal. I was about to receive a double lung transplant and have a new chance at life.

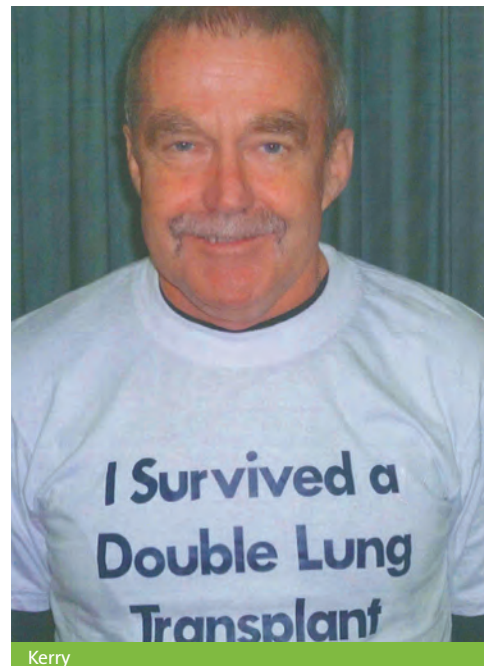
Since that phone call, I now look at every moment and every day as being a bonus. I have gone from nothing to having everything following my double lung transplant. Getting out of bed, performing simple tasks, and catching up with friends while on continuous oxygen was frustrating.

I am now able to spend time with family, working, and walking nearly 10km every day. When asked why I enjoy my daily walks so much, I quickly respond with, 'Because I can'.

I treasure every day since that moment, spending time with my family and knowing that I may not have had this opportunity. Each morning I am reminded of the generous gift that my donor and their family made. Waking up and taking my first breath, I always pause and say thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to go for a walk, to cheer on my favourite footy team, for the time spent with my family, for everything.

Thank you for giving me my life back.
Thank you.

Kerry



Kerry

**Start the organ
and tissue donation
discussion today**



The day our family changed forever

My sister was a special person from the day she was born, as she entered the world on Christmas Day. Our family—Mum, Dad, Donna and myself had discussed organ donation as a family and all agreed it was a good idea, but never thought it would happen to us.

Mum, Dad and myself said goodbye to Donna as she got into her car to drive to visit her best friend. Life changed forever that day when Mum and Dad received a phone call from John Hunter Hospital to say Donna had been flown there and was in critical condition.

When we arrived, doctors explained that Donna was on life support. The shock is unexplainable and it is not a situation that anybody ever expects to happen. A Donor Coordinator was sent to talk to us and said Donna would be a candidate for donation. Our decision was an easy one as we knew that's what Donna would have wanted. We knew this because we had already had the discussion.

Donna was pronounced brain dead and her organs were removed. Two children and two adults received organs and a new life. This has given our family some comfort over the years, knowing some good could come from our tragedy.

Donna wasn't speeding or doing anything wrong she simply leaned over to change a cassette tape in her car and lacked concentration for a few seconds, which we have all done from time to time. Nobody thinks it will happen to them but if it does, you need to know your loved ones wishes. That's why it is important to discuss it with your family. People need to ask themselves if their child needed an organ, would they accept it? Of course they would, so people also have to be willing to give.

Ron, Sandra and Karen



Donna.

**Start the organ
and tissue donation
discussion today**



Our neighbour's extraordinary gift

Glen had a very unsettled start to life. He failed to thrive and was diagnosed with kidney reflux.

At eight weeks of age, after several operations to remove the obstruction, his left kidney was removed. His medical prognosis indicated that his right kidney had also suffered significant damage.

With expert advice and guidance from a pediatric nephrologist he managed to grow and achieve at school. He excelled at sport—in particular golf and cricket. He was selected in the under 19 Victorian cricket training squad.

During his teens it was necessary for Glen to be treated for rising blood pressure—an indication his remaining kidney was failing.

Glen undertook a Greenkeepers apprenticeship while working at the highly rated Barwon Heads Golf Course.

At the age of 24 he returned home to start dialysis. The hospital set up a dialysis machine in our home. Unfortunately he was unable to work due to the time constraints around dialysis. Family members were not compatible and he faced a possible lengthy wait on the transplant waiting list.

A neighbour, whose son was a classmate of Glen's at primary school, offered to donate one of his kidneys. After extensive tests and counselling, he gave Glen his life saving kidney. Initially the kidney suffered rejection until a suitable immuno-suppressant was found.

Wow! What a life changing gift. Glen returned to full time work and participated in the Adelaide, Canadian and Geelong Transplant Games. He and Barbara married and now have two beautiful boys Riley and Connor.

We continually think of this amazing gift. Glen loves his work as a greenkeeper, plays golf with a handicap of nine, enjoys gardening and most of all is a hands-on dad with his two boys.

What an extraordinary gift organ donation is.

Faye



Glen and John.

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



My experience with renal failure

At the age of 15 my health started to deteriorate and by the age of 20 I had my left kidney removed. I managed to live a fulfilled life for 30 years except the doctors said I could never have a family because of my renal condition.

At this time in my life I adopted two children aged five and seven years. My health remained stable until I began to have more renal symptoms and I ended up on dialysis.

I had home haemodialysis for approximately eight years until I began to reject all forms of dialysis and ended up in hospital for nearly a year (so that I could be evaluated each day).

By the end of the year I had become sicker and was dialysed more regularly. I knew that my time was coming to an end and I had no promise of a transplant. I knew it would be a miracle to receive a new kidney.

My family could not donate for various reasons and then my adopted son came forward and the doctors found he was a match. I did not believe in fate until that moment. I feel that adopting my children was meant to be. It is 10 years since my transplant and I thank my son everyday for his greatest gift to me.

Anne



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



My Valentine's Day gift

'Will it make me feel better?' was my one and only question when my parents told me I needed a heart transplant.

I was 11 at the time. I was extremely lucky and only had to wait two and a half weeks until I got my second chance at life.

A lot of people don't even get that, but each and every day I thank the donor and the family for giving me the gift of life.

I was born with a hole in my heart which was found when I was three years old. I was in and out of hospital at age five and ended up having to have an artificial heart valve and an artificial pacemaker. After my pacemaker insertion, I was fine for a few years until the batteries in the pacemaker 'ran out'. I went into hospital when I was 11 to have a routine pacemaker change-over. Unfortunately, I was getting sicker not better and by the time the doctors

found out the reason was due to an MRSA infection, only 60% of my heart muscle was working and they told me I needed to have a heart transplant.

Two and a half weeks later, on Valentine's Day, I got the call to say there was a heart for me.

If it wasn't for the gift of life from my donor, I would not be here. I say to family and friends 'you don't need your organs when you die, why not save someone's life?'

I'm an organ donor, so when my time is up, hopefully I can also save someone's life.

I understand it is a hard decision to make when faced with the question, which is why it is very important to discuss it when you are alive!

Katrina



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



My sister

I was only eight years old when my sister became the second person in Australia to have a kidney transplant and the first Tasmanian.

I would like to thank that donor's family for giving my sister a chance at life. She lived for another 14 years though passed away when she was 31 years. It wasn't from the kidney transplant—it was from cancer.

My own daughter had the same thing wrong with her and we went through many difficult times. She had reflux and I found out when I was pregnant with her. You can see that over the years things have changed—technology too. She is now 28 and living with kidney disease, but is managing OK.

One day she might need a transplant, though we will look to see if family or friends are compatible.

Gaylene



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



My kidney transplant story

Born in the old Alice Springs Hospital in 1959, I was a small, early baby. I suffered from polio and as a result, spent a long time in the old Hospital. The doctors told my mother that I might not survive.

I grew up in Ernabella, and later as a young woman I moved to Amata (SA) and was teaching children at pre-school there. I had two wonderful children of my own, Jocelyn and Kirsty.

One day I took Kirsty for a holiday to Warburton to see Jocelyn and other family. While I was there, I got really sick, had lots of fluid in my body, was short of breath and couldn't walk. The doctor sent me to Kalgoorlie Hospital, then on to Perth Hospital via the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

I knew I had kidney problems because I had diabetes for years but now had complete kidney failure. I started haemodialysis in Perth and later learnt to set up my own dialysis machine, to put in my own needles for dialysis.

The doctor was really nice but it was a bit scary being in Perth and away from everyone I knew.

I decided to move to Adelaide. My youngest daughter was still a student then, she moved to Adelaide to be with me and to complete her year twelve studies.

I went through all the tests to get onto the kidney transplant waiting list, being on dialysis there for many years. While on dialysis at Wayville, a nurse told me there

was a transplant kidney for me. I went straight to Queen Elizabeth Hospital after dialysis and had the transplant operation the next morning.

My transplanted kidney worked straight away and I did not need to have dialysis again!

I am very grateful for my transplant. I think it's a good thing to donate organs.



Margaret.

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



Neville would have given his last cent—instead he gave life to five Australians

At 18 years of age Neville was a promising student in digital media who also enjoyed dancing and drama.

That same year he was diagnosed with a brain tumour close to his brain stem.

Neville had a biopsy and recovered well but his prognosis was terminal because the tumour was inoperable as it was quite deep.

He incurred some light swelling to the brain but while in hospital he 'crashed' and became unconscious. More surgery followed as his brain continued to swell.

Following waiting, monitoring and tests, I recall my mother saying, 'What do we need to do about organ donation?'

I knew he had filled out forms to register as a donor but more than this I knew the way Neville lived his life was that he would give anyone his last cent if it could help them. I knew he would want to help others by donating his organs.

He did help people.

Five other Australian lives were saved through the generosity of Neville's organ donation—his lungs, kidney and liver. His liver was able to be split so that it saved two lives.

I have had discussions with my family and they all know my wish to donate.

The Theatrix of Performing Arts at Unanderra now has a perpetual trophy to honour Neville but his wonderful giving spirit lives on through organ donation.

Liza



Neville.

Australia is
a world leader
for successful
transplant outcomes



How lucky am I?

My name is Judanne and I'm now 57. My parents emigrated from the US to Australia and my medical examination results showed I had kidney failure. I was just 17 and the diagnosis of glomerulonephritis meant very little to me.

By the age of 27, I started haemodialysis while living in Brisbane and luckily I was offered a transplant ten months later from an anonymous cadaveric donor. My transplant 'took' immediately and within two years I was on an extended holiday in Tasmania at my friend Caroline's home where I stayed with her husband and three children, the youngest of whom was Pru. I moved to Tasmania three years later and became very close to Pru and she has always regarded me as an 'honorary' aunty.

My kidney began to shut down and I started using a dialysis machine while living in Victoria and later Tasmania, again staying with Caroline and became very close again to Pru.

Pru was disturbed by the health difficulties I experienced, so two years later she offered to donate me one of her kidneys. While very grateful for this offer, I was also very afraid for Pru because she was only in her early twenties and naive about the inherent dangers of medical procedures. However the process eventually went ahead.

Pru and I are both doing very well, she is proud of what she has done and I am extremely grateful to her for being brave and generous enough to give me a life away from the dialysis machines for the last six years.

Judanne



Judanne and Pru (see following story).

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



Enjoying life and breathing deep

I was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis at the age of three months. During my school years and early adulthood my health remained very stable. I lived what I considered to be a normal life like any other teenager (I only had one admission to hospital while I was in high school).

In my mid 30's I noticed my health was slowly deteriorating and with it my lung function. I was becoming more tired. I struggled with weight, daily chores, and working at my part-time job as a youth worker.

I kept pushing myself to prove I could do it and I was ok. It was coming at a cost physically and emotionally. I was approached about lung transplantation. I decided the time was right and the work up began.

I knew deep down I needed a transplant. I was feeling angry at times and frustrated because I was losing control.

One special day I was woken by my nurses to the news that there was a possible match and if all goes ok, I will be getting some new lungs.

Luke and I made a pact we would not say goodbye. When I went into theatre it was 'see you when I get out'.

Today, as I write this, I am now nearly 12 months post transplant and my life is just perfect. I am walking, bike riding even jogging short distances. Due to my old lungs I was not able to fly in a plane so I had not flown for 16 years; since my transplant I have flown a dozen times and loved every minute of it.

There is so much more I would love to write about the happiness I feel. Also how much of a role my family and friends have played in this journey of my second chance of life. Most of all, I have a connection with a family I will never meet, and due to their decision to donate their loved one's organs, I will always be eternally grateful. I will light a candle for my donor every year in remembrance. I will continue to celebrate my life every day.

Please everyone, discuss organ donation with your family.

Toni



Toni and Luke. Enjoying life and breathing deep.

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



Back on track thanks to Bone Bank

Ashleigh's dream of becoming an elite gymnast seemed all but lost after suffering a back spasm during a practice session which was later diagnosed as the result of scoliosis. Within only a few months, scans showed the curvature of her spine was progressing rapidly, leaving Ashleigh far from the healthy active teenager she once was.

The initial treatment of a back brace was trialled but unfortunately did little to correct the 48 degree lumbar curve leaving her so debilitated. It was then

Ashleigh and her parents were advised surgery was the only option. Metal rods were inserted and her spine then fused using bone graft generously donated by patients undergoing hip replacement surgery. Post-operatively Ashleigh has regained much of her flexibility and remains grateful to the anonymous people who made her recovery that much easier.

As a result of her experience, Ashleigh hopes to work within the health profession so as to assist others.



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



An honour and a privilege

As a health professional working in organ and tissue donation for the past 21 years, I feel very privileged to have witnessed first hand the generosity of donors and their families who have considered and agreed to organ and tissue donation at an incredibly traumatic time in their lives.

Working originally as a Donor Coordinator, I was closely involved with the family, providing them with information and support and guiding them through the donation process. It is very humbling to sit with a family while they share intimate moments and recall anecdotes of their loved one with you. The decisions that they made have literally saved the lives of hundreds of Australians and enhanced the lives of many others.

Over the years, donor families have helped health professionals too. They have helped to shape our practices by providing us with valuable insight into their needs and how we can best support them. In my current role as Agency Manager, I manage the provision of bereavement support to families and education to staff in hospitals to ensure that families are offered the opportunity of donation in a compassionate and respectful manner.

In reflecting on my experience with donor families, I would say without hesitation, that many families have drawn comfort from the fact that they were able to honour the wishes of their loved ones by agreeing to donation and helping others.

My heartfelt thanks goes to all families who have been a part of the donation journey and my encouragement goes to future families who discuss organ donation and make their wishes known.

Tina



Tina.

**The majority of
Australians support organ
and tissue donation.**



Anthony

Anthony was the family's first male grandchild, adept at getting his own way from an early age. Already showing signs of being a gifted child he knew complete movie scripts by the time he was three and taught himself Spanish from the TV.

His fascination with throwing things over the fence—all his toys, all the dog's toys and bowls, made me wonder if he even tried to throw the dog over too (as it was a Chihuahua)!

Although his parents separated they stayed in touch and Anthony, who had a deadly left foot, loved to play footy in the backyard with his dad and little brother.

Anthony's school reports were always impressive. He scored many A's and nearly as many mentions that he loved to have a chat. His mates looked up to him as he listened, cared and was the mediator. One of his strongest traits was that he never discriminated.

He was a sportsman—excelling at swimming and training religiously to achieve a brown belt in karate. He won several trophies at Cycle Speedway and rode a customised bicycle flat out to finish third in the Aussie titles. He trained hard at tennis, becoming his local club's Junior Rising Star after just one year. His dad practised with him to the point of exhaustion and never won a game! As his grandparents watched him grow to nearly

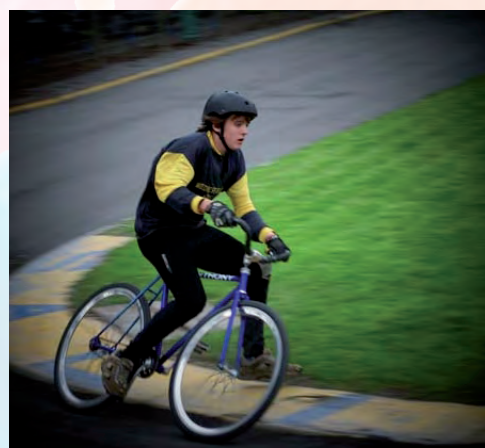
six feet tall, they also saw him develop into a fine sportsman.

He battled asthma all his life and his mother was always there to support him. He was like her in so many ways, as he would rather give than receive. That's what won people's hearts.

When he suffered his final severe asthma attack and didn't recover he was still giving. His healthy organs were donated to five families, bringing them the joy of hope for the future.

Anthony's dad carries a permanent reminder of his son—a picture etched into the skin of his torso and the words: 'He was never selfish; always helpful and kind. What beautiful memories he left behind.'

Sharkey (Grandfather)



Anthony.

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A mother's story

I had lovingly and willingly cared for my son on dialysis for eight years. In this time I watched his body weaken, suffering setbacks and health problems, until that long awaited phone call came at 4am one morning.

Before this, his diet was strict - vegetables that had to be peeled and soaked in separate bowls of water for three hours, and then re-boiled in unsalted water; protein was limited; and, no more than 500mls of fluid in any one day.

After two years of dialysis every alternative day, his loving father was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and our nightmare began, alternating between dialysis, chemotherapy and radiation. Sadly my husband died three years before our son received his transplant. He died traumatised at leaving me with a very ill son, and my grief was intense, but somehow I gained the strength to continue.

'Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery.

Today is a gift, that's why we call it—the present'.

This little rhyme became my bible!

When my son was driven to hospital to have his transplant, I cried. I appreciated the sacrifice that had been made by another family somewhere. In their time of utter despair and grieving, they had agreed to donate the organs from their loved one to rescue the lives of others—of complete strangers.

My son's life would be transformed. What generosity – what humanity. I silently and tearfully thanked the donor and their family.

Severe pain and a lengthy battle against infection and rejection awaited my son as we outwardly showed confidence it would be successful. But he is a tough one, my son, and once well again, started to experience the freedom of a normal healthy young man. I am only sad to think of the joy my dear husband didn't see – his precious son released from the bondage of dialysis.

The support we received from friends and family aided in his recovery, and our eternal gratitude goes to our donor family, who we thank annually for their most wonderful 'Gift of Life'.

Dawn



Dawn.

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



Two chances at life

My name is Gemma and I was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis when I was three weeks old. I remained quite healthy throughout my childhood, with parents Malcolm and Wendy always encouraging me and having fun with my older sister Natalie.

When I was 11 years old, blood tests showed my liver function started to decline and a close eye was kept on my liver for the next few years. Eventually it was decided I would need a liver transplant. As a 13 year old, I just accepted it and got on with it, although it was overwhelming and scary.

The phone rang one day and Mum gave me a thumbs up sign. It was the hospital saying they had a liver for me.

I was wheeled off to surgery after an emotional goodbye with the family (I knew I was in good hands though). After a long two month recovery, I got on with being a 14 year-old again. My teenage years were very healthy and the liver transplant also helped to keep my lungs healthy for a good six years.

At 20, after years of treatments, intravenous antibiotics and hospital admissions, my lungs started to go downhill and became immune to a lot of the antibiotics. At 21, I was put on the transplant waiting list. I have been waiting for three months. I can't wait to get my lung transplant and get my 21 year

old self back. What 21 year-old wants to use a wheelchair and be on oxygen all the time? Not me. I love partying with friends, having a laugh and living it up. I plan to travel and complete studying when I do get my transplant; right now I am too sick.

Organ donation does save lives and it is the greatest thing a family can do for someone else. I think of my liver donor all the time and am forever grateful.

Please discuss organ donation with your family and friends. We don't like the topic of dying, but for those waiting on the list, we face it every day.

Gemma



21 and not giving up!

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



Twanny's gift of life after 40 years

My name is Twanny and I received a kidney transplant 40 years ago. Today, with the same functioning kidney transplant, I cannot help but reflect on my life and the people who played a pivotal role in getting me so far.

Originally hemodialysis was only available in hospitals, which consisted of six to eight hours, three times a week depending on overall health condition.

When my father died I realised what an important person this man was in my life. My rock. He directly and indirectly taught me how to be a man in so many different ways. The biggest lesson he taught me was that even as a man it was alright to feel different emotions and to be able to cry whether you were happy, sad or in pain. On his death the family agreed to his wishes to become a donor. So for our family the circle has been completed. I was a recipient and in turn, my father became a donor.

Since my transplant I have been diagnosed with many other health issues such as vision, cardiac and mobility issues just to mention a few. However this has not stopped me from enjoying life to the fullest. Though now retired, I have been gainfully employed since my transplant, the last 15 years managing my own business.

Socially I have participated in competition ballroom dancing, cycling, bowling, dining out and much more. The last 18 months

have been a pleasure working with my guide dog Valli who keeps me company and keeps me safe.

Most importantly, this journey would not be possible without the donor family. Even though I don't know who they are and they don't know me, I'd like to think that I haven't wasted the gift I was given in their time of sorrow. This has motivated me to become a volunteer public speaker for DonateLife Victoria.

Finally, remember to enjoy life, as it is the only one we have.

Twanny



Twanny and Valli's graduation in November 2010 at Guide Dogs Victoria in Kew.

**The majority of
Australians support organ
and tissue donation.**



Just do it!

I was so touched by a news story where a woman donated a kidney to her friend, that I made the call to put myself on the living donor list. My donation was to be altruistic so everything was strictly confidential and I would not know the identity of the recipient. I told my very close family about the donation and they were all so supportive, even though their reactions were very different—ranging from ‘you are nuts!’ to ‘how generous’.

I started a healthier way of life so as to be able to give my recipient as healthy a kidney as I could and for me to recuperate quickly. My recipient could be of any age, sex, race or religion. Over the period of a year, I had many visits to the hospital for consultations, different scans, x-rays and blood tests. This also gave me time to think and I could change my mind at any time.

With a week to go until the donation, the butterflies started. So I just kept very busy and positive. Once I got to the hospital I relaxed and got caught up in the ‘excitement’ as the transplant team spend so much time with their patients that they become friends. Today one of their friends will soon have a second chance of a healthier life.

A couple of days after the kidney donation all the tubes were removed and I could get up and walk about. On the third day I was well enough to go home. Before I left, my transplant co-coordinator who was a wonderful, helpful and supportive friend gave me a ‘green ribbon’ which is the ribbon for live organ donors. I asked her to deliver a get well card to the recipient who I was told was doing well.

In all the time that has passed, I have corresponded often with my recipient through the transplant team and every letter is a treasure. Every year I receive beautiful flowers from my recipient and by me dropping a pebble in the water the ripple effect of ‘feel good’ continues for me and my friends.

I continue with good health, if not better, as I continue to drink lots of water, and keep well. If just one person makes the decision I did, this story won’t be a waste and the ripple effect will continue.

Anonymous.

**Ask and know your
loved one's donation wishes**





Australian Government
Organ and Tissue Authority

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Alternative format

The *DonatLife Book of Life* is available electronically on the Authority's website at www.donatlife.gov.au

