

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