



Donor Families  
AUSTRALIA



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## MEDIA RELEASE

12 March 2018

For immediate release

### Australia's First Donor-Recipient Contact Register

Until now, despite the wishes of many donor families and recipients who have shared the donation-transplant experience, connection between both sides has been actively blocked by healthcare organisations who fear that either party will suffer if they meet or communicate.

Following many attempts to open the conversation which has led to ongoing frustration for donor families and recipients, Donor Families Australia is now spearheading a consumer-led movement to connect consenting organ and tissue donor families with recipients.

From today, donor families and recipients can register their details through the Donor Families Australia website for contact. If certain criteria and consent to conditions is met by both sides, then a mutual introduction can be made.

"The fear that donor families or recipients will suffer disappointment or behave badly if they meet is putting the potential risk way above the likelihood of that happening. We know from speaking with our own members, and a large number of others in the donor and recipient community, that they believe they have a right to meet if both parties want to," says Donor Families Australia Chair, Bruce McDowell.

"The stories we hear from those who have made contact are about this important connection, how affirming and touching it has been for each side to hear the stories of those who have been given such an amazing gift by someone they have never met, and how the recipient is now enjoying this precious gift. This is the real human side - what organ and tissue donation is all about.

"From a community perspective, it is also important to note that the view of organ donation is enhanced when the community are witness to positive relationships between bereaved families and the recipients of their donation," he said.

Currently there is limited research into donor family – recipient relationships but the conservative approach used by organ donation and transplantation organisations in Australia is certainly not meeting the needs of many donor families and recipients.

Adds Dr Holly Northam from Donor Families Australia: "Silencing donor families has been normal practice across transplantation organisations where fear of relationship breakdowns has driven gatekeepers to demand anonymity from bereaved families.

"This lack of transparency surprises and distresses many involved in the donor-recipient equation. As consumer rights and ideas of social justice gain traction, and social media changes the way we communicate, it is timely to open a conversation that honours these relationships. This is what Donor Families Australia is trying to achieve by facilitating Australia's first Donor Recipient Contact Register," she said.

**Ends**

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## **MEDIA ENQUIRIES**

**Bruce McDowell** // Chair // Mobile: 0427 645 262

### **ABOUT DONOR FAMILIES AUSTRALIA**

Formed in 2013, Donor Families Australia is a national member-based independent support and advocacy group comprising families who have donated their loved ones' organs and tissue. It is the only organisation of its kind in Australia, specifically dedicated to Donor Families.

Donor Families Australia assists all families with what they are going through, providing a safe and trusted network to:

- Share stories and experiences
- Express themselves freely, and
- Ensure they are heard and understood.

#### **For more information:**

[www.donorfamiliesaustralia.org](http://www.donorfamiliesaustralia.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/DonorFamiliesAustralia>