

Improving Australia's Low Organ Donation Rate

In Australia as of 2020 around 1,650 people are currently waitlisted for a transplant, with a further 12,000 on dialysis who may benefit from a kidney transplant.

In Australia, a person must register their consent to donate their organs or tissues. This is sometimes referred to as an opt-in system of organ donation. While approximately three in every four Australians believe organ donation is important, only one in three people are registered as organ donors¹.

In an opt-out system, a person is presumed to have given their consent to be a donor before their death. Organs may not be taken if a person has registered not to be donor, or their family members (next of kin) object.

Spain adopted an opt-out system 40 years ago, following which transplantations have risen from 14.3 per million population in 1980 to almost 49 deceased donors per million population in 2019, the world's highest donation rate. By way of comparison, Australia's current rate stands at 18.2 per million population, which puts Australia in 17th place internationally for deceased organ donations.

Spain's success is also attributable to several additional factors². The Spanish government established a national transplant co-ordinator network across all hospitals, and invested substantially in facilitating the early identification of potential donors by designating hospital staff specifically for this purpose.

In order to adopt world's best practice to encourage organ donations for transplantations, The New Liberals will promote:

- A consistent nationwide opt-out system for organ donation;
- Implementation of all 57 recommendations of the National Review of the Australian organ donation³, retrieval and transplantation system, with particular emphasis on those promoting equity of access for First Nations and remote area recipients, and on providing a well resourced national organ donation network in conjunction with the the federal Organ and Tissue Authority⁴.

Australian Government Organ and Tissue Authority – <https://www.donatelife.gov.au>

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¹ <https://transplant.org.au/statistics/>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8128443/>

³ <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/02/review-of-the-organ-donation-retrieval-and-transplantation-system-final-report-final-report.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.donatelife.gov.au/about-us>