



THE HON MARK BUTLER MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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ORGAN DONATIONS REACH 10-YEAR HIGH

The number of Australian organ donations is increasing, with June recording the highest rate of donations for the same month over the past decade, Parliamentary Secretary for Health Mark Butler announced today. There have been 31 Australian organ donations nationally.

"The year-to date total of 149 donations shows a sustained improvement over any other first six months of a calendar year in the past decade. The next highest donation rate for the same period was 120 in 2008," Mr Butler said.

"If this trend continues we could have nearly 300 donors by the end of the year. In 2009, 247 donors and their families saved or transformed the lives of almost 800 Australians. However, at 2 June 2010 there were still 1704 Australians on official waiting lists waiting for the phone call that could save their life.

"We are cautiously optimistic about the June figures which show a sustained improvement in the rate of organ donation. They suggest that more Australians are talking about organ and tissue donation and sharing their decision with the people close to them."

Mr Butler said the Gillard Government was committed to lifting organ and tissue donation rates in Australia which, compared to many other countries, was relatively low.

"Over the past month we have been increasing public awareness with the "To donate life, discuss it today. OK" advertising campaign which emphasises the need for potential donors to tell their families of their wishes as in the end consent for organ donation after death depends on the families of the potential donor."

Mr Butler said he was concerned that recent research showed that 18-29 year olds have the lowest level of awareness and knowledge about organ and tissue donation.

"I again urge all Australians, and particularly young people, to discuss their donation wishes with their family to make sure their decisions are known."

The Gillard Government has a \$151 million reform package to boost organ and tissue donation rates. Its initiatives include an ongoing community education program and establishing a national clinical network of staff – over 150 doctors and

nurses located in 76 major hospitals around the country dedicated to improving organ and tissue donation and raising awareness about organ donation in hospitals.

To discover more about organ and tissue donation, what to do when you decide to become a potential donor and suggestions on how to discuss your wishes with your family visit www.donatelife.gov.au

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