



Health
NSW Organ & Tissue
Donation Service

Incorporating:
NSW Bone Bank
Lions NSW Eye Bank
Australian Ocular Biobank

Part of the
DonateLife
network



NSW Tissue Bank Newsletter

August 2021



Welcome to the August 2021 edition of the NSW Tissue Bank Newsletter

DONATELIFE WEEK CELEBRATES ITS 10TH YEAR!

The national awareness campaign for organ and tissue donation was held from 25 July – 1 August 2021, with this year's theme coined the "Great Registration Race". Activities took place and stories were shared across the country to encourage Australians to join the race and register as organ and tissue donors.

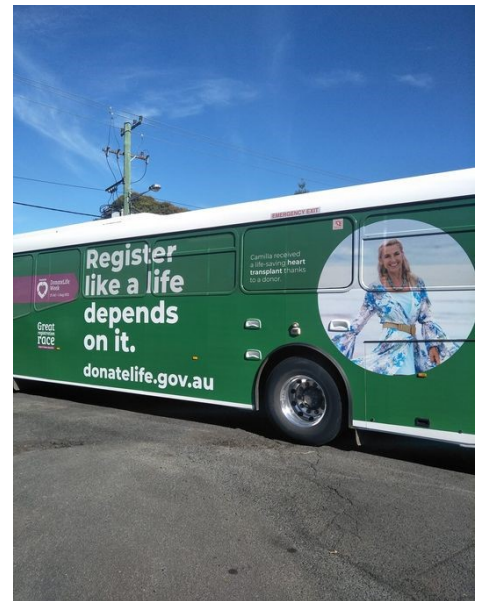
Pictured right: Bankwest Stadium in magenta for DonateLife Week



The NSW Tissue Banks incorporating the Lions NSW Eye Bank, NSW Bone Bank and Australian Ocular Biobank, acknowledges the outstanding generosity and long term support of the Lions NSW-ACT Save Sight Foundation.

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Pictured above left: A poster featuring transplant recipient, Cody

Pictured above centre: NSW café's taking part in the national coffee cup sticker campaign

Pictured above right: a bus decked out in the Great Registration Race artwork in Northern NSW

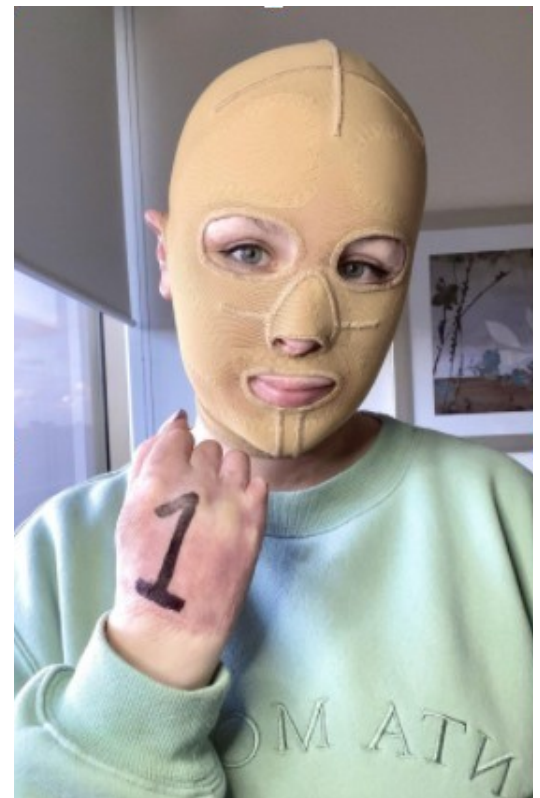
BURNS SURVIVOR AND TISSUE RECIPIENT, STEPHANIE BROWITT JOINS THE GREAT REGISTRATION RACE CAMPAIGN

Stephanie Browitt, survivor of the White Island tragedy, has contributed to this year's DonatLife Week social media campaign, the Great Registration Race by posting her 'one' to Instagram. The campaign involved sharing a photo with your finger in a number one, highlighting that registering to be a donor takes 'one' minute through the DonatLife link in the caption and tagging two friends to continue the trend. It was designed to bring awareness to the 13 million eligible Australians that aren't already registered to be a donor to join the race.

Tragically, from the incident, Stephanie suffered burns to 70% of her body and she details that she is "only alive today because of donor skin tissue and the expertise and dedication of the medical team of specialists involved in [her] treatment and recovery". After receiving skin from tissue donors from both New Zealand and Australian hospitals back in 2019, she is currently on the road to recovery and is 1.5 years into her 2 year pressure garment journey.

Becoming a skin donor can save lives, just like Stephanie's.

Pictured right: Stephanie Browitt



BIOENGINEERED EYE TISSUE TO HELP IN FIGHT AGAINST GLOBAL CORNEAL BLINDNESS

In a world-first, a national consortium of clinical, scientific and governance experts, including the NSW Organ and Tissue Donation Service, will develop bioengineered eye tissue to treat corneal blindness.

The project, which is funded through the Medical Research Future Fund 2021 Frontier Health and Medical Research Initiative will address the global challenge of corneal blindness, which is the third most common cause of blindness among all age groups and the leading cause of unilateral blindness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Corneal transplantation currently relies upon deceased human donor corneal tissue. However, an acute global shortage of donor corneal tissue continues to prevent access to treatment.

Worldwide, donor corneas are available for only 1 in 70 patients, with 53% of the world's population being unable to access this tissue.

Professor Gerard Sutton, Project Lead, Corneal Specialist and Co-Medical Director of the NSW Tissue Bank said that although access to services is an ongoing challenge, developing customised, easy to apply therapies is a realistic solution for at-risk populations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

"These novel treatments address various stages of corneal disease, minimising dependency on donor tissue and will have a significant and direct impact on blindness in the world," Professor Sutton said.

The national consortium will develop corneal replacement tissue which will provide multiple, customised therapies for corneal disease, with an emphasis on transportable therapies with extended shelf-life for use in remote communities for groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who have historically experienced difficulty accessing treatment.

"The success of this program will help millions of patients both nationally and globally to restore vision, improving their quality of life and reducing the social and economic burden associated with blindness," Professor Sutton said. The development of the bioengineered corneal tissue is only made possible by using generously donated human tissue. Australians are encouraged to register as organ and tissue donors at donatelife.gov.au.

The national consortium includes University of Sydney, University of Wollongong, University of Melbourne, Queensland University of Technology, Centre for Eye Research Australia, and the NSW Organ & Tissue Donation Service.

THANK YOU FROM A GRATEFUL CORNEAL RECIPIENT

The below letter was sent to Sydney/Sydney Eye Hospital from a corneal transplant patient, thanking the staff, donors and their families for making corneal transplantation possible.

"I am a very active female in my 90s and have just had my third cornea transplant at the Sydney Eye Hospital. I cannot speak highly enough of all the caring staff. I felt that nothing was a trouble to them at any time. I would also like to thank all donors and their families for giving people, like myself, the opportunity to still enjoy life and be independent. All these wonderful people are always in my nightly prayers. God Bless them all."

UPDATE ON AMNION DONATION

How does the program work?

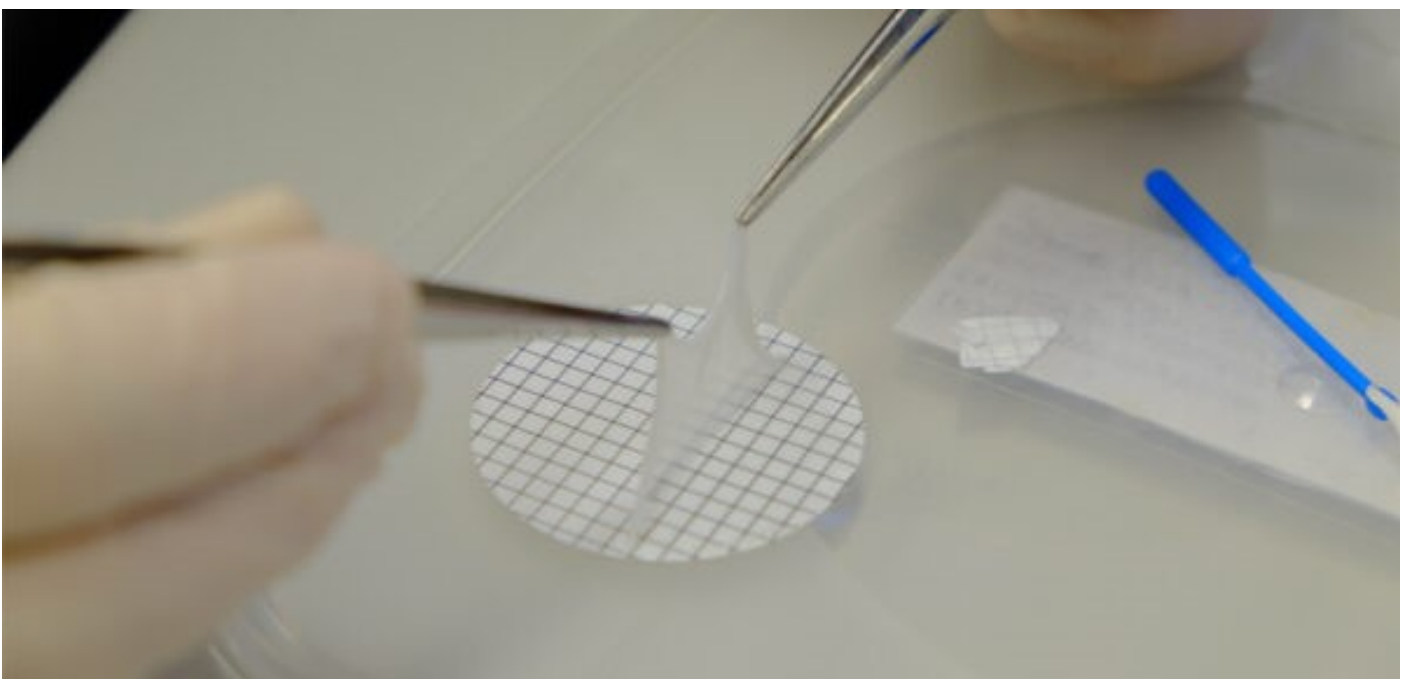
In NSW, women who are having an elective C-section are able to donate their placental tissue which can then be utilised for a variety of medical uses including ophthalmic surgery and wound care. Once consent is obtained from a patient and a record of general health history is checked, the tissue is transported back to the NSW Tissue bank for preparation and storage. The membrane can be cryopreserved for up to a period of 12 months. All donors are phoned 6-8 weeks after their donation to exclude any concerns and the tissue is not released until this process is completed and all safety requirements are met.

Prior to the establishment of the program in late 2018, surgeons had to apply through the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for special access to acquire tissue from New Zealand. Dr Steven Tan, an obstetrician at the Mater Hospital, feels “privileged to be a part of the program”. Whilst the hospital delivers around 2,000 babies a year, the opportunity for donations is very high. He “usually begin(s) the donation conversation towards the end of the final trimester” and acknowledges whilst some patients have plans for their placenta, “the majority of patients simply agree to have their placenta discarded, so this group is highly receptive to donation”.

For the first time in history, Australia is nearing the ability to have cryopreserved amnion membrane readily available to patients and will be further bolstered by plans for the NSW Tissue Bank to develop similar relationships with other hospitals around Sydney.

For further information about the growing demand and the ways NSW Organ and Tissue Donation Service is engaging with amnion donation, please [click this link](#) to be directed to a mivision article.

Pictured below: Final preparation of amniotic membrane



STAFF PROFILE

Meet Pierre Georges - *Tissue Donor
Coordination Team Leader - NSW Tissue
Bank*

I have studied and worked at Sydney/Sydney Eye Hospital for over 25 years and have had a passion for science and medicine since I was a primary school student. The staff are amazing people who show great respect to their patients and are dedicated to providing the best service to them.

As part of my role, I provide clinical leadership to the staff at the NSW Tissue Bank, where we conduct deceased donor identification and consent, support families of tissue donors, distribute tissue for life-changing transplantation, and implement protocols in accordance with legislation set by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). I'm involved in leading research projects related to tissue donation and transplantation, and represent the NSW Tissue Bank at state and national industry groups.

I fondly remember my experience with the father of a 9 year old boy who had been blind since the age of 3, but was able to become an eye donor when he passed away. After explaining that eye donation was actually possible, due to the corneas (clear front of the eye) still being healthy, the father agreed and his son was able to save the sight of 2 people. Since then, I always use the message "even blind people can give sight" when educating health professionals and the community about the gift of eye donation.



DON'T MISS 'THE CALL' - A DOCO ABOUT ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION, NOW SHOWING ON 9NOW

The Call is a new documentary bringing together the emotional experiences of donor families, organ recipients, those waiting for a life-saving transplant and the specialist teams who make donation possible. The documentary features the experiences of a young liver recipient, Layla, and her mother alongside a heart recipient, Jayden. These stories are intertwined with those of donor families whose loss is silver lined with the gift of donating life to others. Viewers are also exposed to the reality of life for Paul who is currently on dialysis waiting for the call and are given an insight to the role of a Donation Specialist Nursing Coordinator.

You can [click here](#) to watch the documentary now or search 'The Call' in the 9Now app.

Pictured right: Philippa Delahoy, wife of Scott and Jayden Cummins, a heart recipient; both DonateLife NSW volunteers starring in the documentary



UPCOMING EVENTS

Jersey Day has been inspired by the story of Nathan Gremmo who tragically lost his life in an accident in 2015. Nathan's family chose to give the gift of life to others to honour the legacy of Nathan's generous personality. On Jersey Day, schools and workplaces across Australia don their favourite sporting jersey to show their support. For more information about Jersey Day and how you can become involved, visit jerseyday.com.au

Friday the 22nd of October is Saffron Day which honours Deyaan Udani who tragically passed away on a family holiday in 2016. Deyaan and his sister learned about organ and tissue donation at school and told their parents they wanted to be organ donors to save the lives of others. Deyaan gave the precious gift of life to four people. On this day Australians are urged to 'Do it for Deyaan', wear something orange and begin the conversation with family and friends about organ donation. For more information about Saffron Day, visit saffronday.org.