



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Organ Donation

SPEECH

Monday, 15 November 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Georganas, Steve, MP

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Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (12.27 pm)—I too rise in support of the private member's motion on organ donation and would like to thank the member for Canberra for bringing this important issue to the attention of the House. I am sure that all of us in this House, of all political persuasions, have the same wish, and that is the wish for the life-sustaining and life-enhancing gift through organ donation to increase to meet the ever present need that is required. Many, many thousands of lives could be renewed through the practice of organ donation and transplant, relieving the pain and suffering of those directly concerned and improving their place in the world, in the community and in our health and hospital system.

About two years ago we spoke in this place on a government bill, the Australian Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation Authority Bill 2008. That was a little over two years ago, and we spoke of the 30,000 Australians who had benefited from organ transplants over that time. But we also spoke of the longstanding shortage of donors and the number of organs for transplant stagnating at around 200 donors per annum, contributing approximately three times that number of organs to those who needed them most—200 people contributing some 600 to 700 transplants per year. The motion that we are debating here today mentions 228 donations having been made this year to date. This and the contributions of previous years are clearly a long way short of meeting the needs of the approximately 1,800 people who are awaiting an organ transplant at any one time.

Australia has not historically contributed towards successful transplants at anything like the rate of people within other developed countries, but we are improving. Earlier, we heard the member for Brisbane talk about Spain and that 35 Spanish people per million are registered donors compared with 10 Australians per million. Australians are increasing our registrations but we can clearly do so much more. Today I hope that this motion will encourage more Australians to put their names on the register as donors.

It is interesting to note that the highest concentration of Australian organ donors in 2006, live and deceased combined, were in the age bracket of 15 to 24. There were 105 donors in this group, compared with 59 between the ages of 25 and 34; 50 between the ages of 35 and 44; 77 between the ages of 45 and 54; and 45 between the ages of 55 and 64. Beyond these ages, the number of donors decreased substantially. In that one year there were 202 deceased donors, yet 360 donors in total—a substantial number, as a proportion, of living donors. Over the 12 months from January 2006, Medicare Australia consent and intent registrations rose from 5.57 million to 5.66 million. That is an increase of some 90,000-odd people, or 1.6 per cent of potential donors.

We can do much more, and much more is needed. It is the good and the right thing to do. To this end, we introduced and passed the Australian Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation Authority Bill 2008 back in 2008. Our world's best practice reform package on organ and tissue donations for transplantation commenced last year, funded to the tune of \$136.4 million over four years. Drawing from both international and Australian experience and tailored to fit with the Australian context, the reform package consists of the following: a coordinated, consistent approach spearheaded by the national organ donation authority and a network of nationally coordinated organ procurement organisations to facilitate the donation process; new funding for medical specialist positions and other clinical positions in public and private hospitals around Australia dedicated to organ and tissue donation; a new funding stream for Australia's public and private hospitals to cover the additional staffing and infrastructure costs associated with it; an enhanced national education and training program for health professionals involved with organ donation; and an ongoing, nationally coordinated, community awareness and education program, which is ever so important to get the message out to get people registered. (*Time expired*)