



Organ and tissue donation for transplantation

Organ and tissue donation allows for transplantation, an accepted therapeutic treatment.

Organs and tissues can be donated by people with a clinical determination of “brain death”, or following death (non-beating-heart donors). In some circumstances organs and tissues can be donated by people who are living (living donors).

It is the position of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation that:

1. A person’s decision about donating his or her organs or tissues should be respected.
2. The dignity and privacy of the donor must be protected at all times.
3. Health care services engaging in organ and tissue donation must have appropriate policies in place to protect donors; as well as guidelines for the support of donor families and hospital staff. These policies and guidelines must reflect the relevant Human Tissue Acts (however titled) throughout Australia.
4. The provision of nursing or midwifery care to individuals takes precedence over the person’s potential to donate organs and tissues.
5. Nurses and midwives must be enabled to fulfil their duty of care obligations and are encouraged to follow the ethical guidelines set down by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), ¹ the Code of Ethics for Nurses in Australia, and the Code of Ethics for Midwives in Australia. ²
6. Greater efforts in identifying potential donors by health care providers, such as nurses or midwives, together with an increased awareness and acceptance of organ and tissue donation by the general public, will potentially increase the number of donor organs and tissues for transplantation.
7. Timely liaison with the health care professionals including organ donor coordinators is essential to ensure that an effective team approach to organ donation is achieved. This will ensure legal obligations are met, appropriate family discussions take place and the psychological, cultural and spiritual needs of families are recognised.
8. Effective liaison with transplant recipient coordinators, transplant teams and staff of health care facilities is essential to ensure that a team approach to supporting recipients is achieved. This will enable the appropriate nursing, midwifery and medical care is delivered to transplant recipients.
9. Counselling and other assistance must be made available to health care staff who may experience stress during the process of an individual’s death, organ and tissue donation and care of the donor’s family.
10. All health care services involved in the donation of organs from a living person must have policies which reflect the Human Tissue Acts (however titled) across Australia and are in close alignment with the NHMRC ethical guidelines. ¹



11. Health care services engaging in transplantation must have appropriate policies and guidelines in place to protect the people receiving a transplant.
12. Access to organ and tissue transplantation must be provided equitably to potential recipients and there should be transparency in the allocation process.
13. Where the donor is unknown to the recipient, confidentiality of information is essential; the anonymity of the donor, recipient and their respective families must be preserved. Disclosure of identifying information other than to health professionals involved in the process is prohibited.
14. The sale of organ and/or tissues is strictly prohibited by state and territory legislation.

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reviewed and re-endorsed August 2005
reviewed and re-endorsed November 2008
reviewed and re-endorsed November 2011
reviewed and re-endorsed August 2015*

Reference

1. National Health and Medical Research Council ethical guidelines. Available at www.nhmrc.gov.au
2. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. 2010. Available at: <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Codes-Guidelines.aspx#codeofethics>