

Organ Retrieval and Donation to the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council
1996.4. Organ Retrieval and Donation

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To the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council on **Arrangements for Organ Retrieval and Donation**

We made the following main points:

Australia has one of the lowest rates of organ donations, for transplants and hundreds each year because of this shortage.

General public is poorly informed about the existing programs and its many successes. The media should assist in this area.

Only a small minority of people carry organ donor cards: many are unaware of such provision. The family may reject request for organs and so ignore the wishes of the deceased.

We therefore support the proposal of an organ registry where competent adults may enlist to specify their wishes regarding the donation of their organs. These advance directives, stored in a central registry, would allow the exercise of autonomy and personal responsibility.

Incentives could enhance this program: organ donors would have priority to receive organs from this program should they require a transplant. Those who did not wish to be donors will join the normal waiting list should they become recipients. Exceptions, as at present, would be made on the basis of age and prognosis.

Such prior commitments would facilitate matching for compatibility between donors and recipients.

Opting-out system, i.e. only those who refuse to be donors carry a card to indicate this. With this "presumed consent" system, Austria and Belgium achieve a much higher kidney procurement than others.

Familial consent should be required only in cases of children and mentally handicapped adults.

Otherwise relatives should not be able to disregard a stated wish of an autonomous adult.

Each of these measures would require a program of community education.

(List of references supplied).
