

don't take your organs to heaven: God knows we need them here

Do you know that almost 2000 people in Australia are on organ transplant waiting lists at any given time? Tragically, some will die waiting.

We can all make a difference by giving of ourselves to help others, but there is more to this than just what happens when we die.

blood donations

You can donate blood through the Red Cross. Many people assume blood is only used in transfusions but a significant proportion is processed to make other products used in medical treatments. Blood donations can be made once a quarter but it is possible to make plasma donations fortnightly. Plasma is a vital ingredient in many blood products.

Some treatments require blood or bone marrow products where the donor is compatible with the patient. The Red Cross seeks to find these matches so your donation can go to a specific patient.

organ donations

You can donate organs when you die and these are used in transplants to give others a second chance at life. Organs that can be used include kidneys, liver, heart, lungs and pancreas. In addition, heart valves, bone, skin and corneas from your eyes can be used.

You can get more information from Medicare offices, by phoning 1800 777 203 or visiting www.hic.gov.au/organ

donating organs for research

You must die in hospital to be able to donate organs for transplant so they can be used quickly with minimal loss of blood supply. However, your organs can still be used for medical research.

One such program is the Brain Donor program run by the University of Sydney. Potential donors are recruited and given cognitive tests whilst they are alive so researchers have a history of the brain's function.

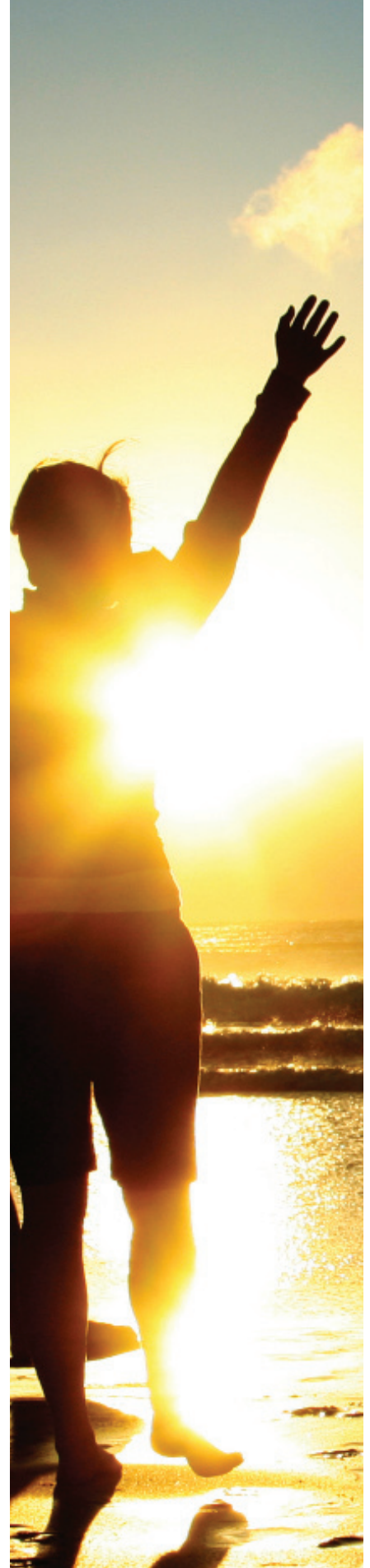
donating your whole body

Body donation programs allow you to give your whole body for medical research. The Anatomy Act in each state strictly controls how your body can be used. Donation programs allow you to define exactly how your remains are treated. Sometimes the body will be kept indefinitely for teaching but in most cases it will be returned for burial or cremation.

At present, Australia has one of the lowest rates of organ and body donation in the world but public awareness has increased. If you are interested, it is important to discuss your wishes with your family and register with the Health Insurance Commission.

Source: Health Insurance Commission, www.abc.net.au/science

For more information on community visit www.ipac.com.au/lifedirections



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