

Organ Donation

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Australia's national reform agenda for organ donation and transplantation has resulted in an overall increase in the rate of organ donation from deceased donors (deceased organ donation), with a rise of 104% in the years 2009 to 2016.¹ Notwithstanding such success, there continues to be a significant gap between supply and demand for organs, with around 1400 individuals currently on national organ transplant waiting lists in Australia.² Although there have been exciting new developments in stem cell and 3D printing,³ as well as medical successes in transplanting a broader range of organs (and tissue) in recent years,⁴ the current reality is that this gap is likely to persist, and may be exacerbated in the future for a number of reasons. First, medical and technological advances have resulted in more people becoming eligible to receive an organ transplant than was previously the case.⁵ Second, there has been an exponential rise in the number of Australians with chronic medical conditions leading to end-organ damage, such as hypertension and diabetes.⁶

Notwithstanding the considerable success of the national reform agenda, the persistence of organ shortage requires us to reflect on the future direction of organ donation policy. Important questions to consider in this regard include whether Australia has the right approach to increasing the rate of deceased organ donation? Are the current strategies employed to address the problem effective or are there alternative strategies that should be explored? Drawing on these questions, it is argued that a more diverse range

* The chapter draws on research done while in receipt of an Australian Research Council (ARC) Future Fellowship, *Regulating Human Body Parts: Principles Institutions and Politics* (FT130101768). The support of the ARC is gratefully acknowledged.

1 Australian Government, Organ and Tissue Authority (OTA), *Australian Donation and Transplantation Activity Report 2016*, <www.donatelife.gov.au/sites/default/files/Australian%20Donation%20and%20Transplantation%20Activity%20Report%202016.pdf>.

2 OTA, *Facts and Statistics*, <www.donatelife.gov.au/discover/facts-and-statistics>.

3 Sean Murphy and Anthony Atala, '3D Bioprinting of Tissues and Organs (2014) 32 *Nature Biotechnology* 773.

4 Chris Johnston, 'Womb Transplants: First 10 British Women Given Go-Ahead', *The Guardian*, 30 September 2015.

5 Anne-Maree Farrell, 'Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation' in Anne-Maree Farrell et al (eds), *Health Law: Frameworks and Context* (Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2017) 216-244.

6 Sunil Nadar, 'Target Organ Damage in Hypertension' in Sunil Nadar and Gregory Lip (eds), *Hypertension* (Oxford Medicine Online, 2nd ed, 2011) <10.1093/med/9780199547579.003.0008>; Alexander Wiseman, 'Kidney Transplant Options for the Diabetic Patient' (2013) 27(4) *Transplant Review* 112.

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