



Speech by

KEN TURNER

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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TRANSPLANTATION AND ANATOMY ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—ONP) (10.17 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

Australia today is leading the world in many areas of medicine, such as research, development and techniques, including organ transplants. Australia has one of the best transplant success rates in the world, with more than 15,000 Australians receiving organ or tissue transplants since 1965. In spite of this, Australia has the lowest rate of organ donations in the Western World.

Heart, lung, kidney, cornea, pancreas, heart valves, liver and bone marrow transplants have saved thousands of lives and increased the quality of life for many thousands more—the latest milestone achievement in the area of transplantation being the attachment of a cadaver's arm to an amputee. Australia, however, suffers from a shortage of organs available for transplant, and Queensland is no different. Kidney and liver failure, heart disease, blindness, leukemia and many other life-threatening and debilitating conditions can be cured in many cases with donor organs and transplant operations, but the lack of donor organs limits the number of people who can be treated, leaving some patients on waiting lists for up to five years. Twenty per cent of these patients will die before a donor organ becomes available. This tragic loss will decrease if we can increase the availability of donor organs.

At this moment, more than 3,000 people in Australia are on waiting lists hoping for organ or tissue transplants. I feel loath to quote an overused phrase, but we have the technology, yet many Australians are dying due to the lack of organ donations. Because of the negative and irresponsible scripts of television medical programs, organ donations have suffered a major setback in Queensland. These programs gave only one person's feelings and experience and failed to address the positive aspects of organ donations. Since the telecasting of those programs, organ donations in Queensland have dropped drastically—up to 50% in some areas. The number of organs available for transplantation has reached a critically low level.

Queensland at present has no set guidelines for the acquisition of donor organs, and to have a driver's licence marked as an organ donor is not sufficient. Permission from next of kin is required, and often permission is refused by relatives who are distraught and emotional after the death of a loved one.

Other States have created registers and mechanisms to alleviate the shortage. In July 1996, the South Australian Government established the South Australian Organ Donation Agency to coordinate the process of organ donation. This system is in turn based on the Spanish model, as devised by Dr Rafael Matesanz. The rate of 22 donors per million was achieved before the organ donation agency's first anniversary. This is double the Australian average of 11 donors per million. Only around 1% of people die in circumstances which allow for transplantation. In South Australia, medical coordinators who are usually involved in the intensive care units are able to influence the timing and manner of the request for organ donations with this method. Very few of the 1% of potential donors are missed.

It is of the utmost importance that Queensland introduces a model designed to increase the number of organ donors and we also need to reassure Queenslanders that the acquisition of organs is

good, and necessary, and saves lives. Whether Queensland adopts the Spanish model, or something similar to the South Australian system, or we create our own system is irrelevant. What we need to do is ensure that as few as possible potential donors are missed. To simplify and help solve this problem in the immediate future, I will introduce to the Parliament a simple amendment to the Transplantation and Anatomy Act that will give legal effect to marking the organ donor space in the driver's licence. At present, ticking this box on your driver's licence has no legal standing, and in the past, relatives and other persons have successfully stopped the organ donation process.

Although in the long term Queensland needs an organ database, the process of starting such a database is a complex task. In the meantime, we can implement this simple measure which will allow people who wish to be donors to mark their driver's licence and to know that, in the unfortunate event they are killed, their organs can be used to save another life. The matter is urgent; the quicker we act the more lives we can save. I commend this Bill to the House.
