

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 30/31 May 2011

Question: E11-337

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION FOR TRANSPLANTATION

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

What is the Agency's policy on who should be asking families about organ donation?

Answer:

The current national policy on requesting family consent to organ and tissue donation, as set out in the DonateLife hospital performance audit (the DonateLife Audit), is that requesting consent should be undertaken by an "appropriate requester". An "appropriate requester" is "a person considered to be sufficiently skilled to undertake discussions about organ and tissue donation with the family of a potential donor. This includes organ donor coordinators (or hospital senior nurses with donor coordination experience), Fellows of the College of Intensive Care Medicine and those who have completed a medical Australasian Donor Awareness Program workshop or equivalent (i.e. Transplant Procurement Management, Verble & Worth workshop) in the past five years."

This national policy is informed by professional guidelines on requesting family consent to organ donation set out in the Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society (ANZICS) *Statement on Death and Organ Donation* (Statement) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) *Ethical Guidelines for Organ and Tissue Donation after Death, for Transplantation* (Ethical Guidelines).

The ANZICS Statement (page 32, 2010) states that "discussing the option of donation with the family is a professional responsibility of the [treating] intensivist", and that "the nurse caring for the patient should be present" in order to provide support and information to the family. The NHMRC Ethical Guidelines (page 32, 2007) state that "donation should be raised with the family by a health professional with experience or specific training in this area" and that "it is preferable that this person is a health professional who has been in contact with the family throughout the process".

Increasing consent rates in Australia is one of the Authority's six strategic priorities for 2011-12. The Authority is reviewing the methods for requesting consent currently practiced in Australia and internationally to identify an evidence-based approach to

requesting consent. Using this information, the Authority is working to establish a nationally-consistent approach and model for requesting consent to complement and clarify the professional guidelines set out in the ANZICS Statement and the NHMRC Ethical Guidelines.

This national model will inform the development of advanced training for health professionals who request family consent to organ and tissue donation.