

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Forty-first Report — The donation conversation: Organ and tissue donation in Western Australia — Tabling

HON PIERRE YANG (North Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [1.22 pm]: I am directed to present the forty-first report of the Standing Committee on Public Administration titled *The donation conversation: Organ and tissue donation in Western Australia*.

[See paper [2976](#).]

Hon PIERRE YANG: This report advises the house that Australia's decreased organ donation rates are significantly lower than those in other countries with comparable healthcare systems. This report examines the issues impacting organ and tissue transplantation rates in Western Australia, opportunities to improve rates and the efficacy of the current model. Approximately two per cent of patients who die in Australian hospitals are eligible to donate their organs. For organs to be viable for donation, a person must die in an intensive care unit or emergency department; thus, it is crucial to maximise all potential organ donation opportunities. The committee found that the key issues impacting Western Australia's organ and tissue donation rates are consent rates, registration rates, adoption of technology and public education and awareness.

Australia's legislative framework is an opt-in consent model. Individuals are encouraged to register on the Australian Organ Donor Register; however, registration is not legally binding. Family consent is always sought regardless of registration status. The committee heard that when a family knows their loved one's wishes, they consent to organ and tissue donation in approximately 90 per cent of cases. When wishes are unknown, many families default to saying no. Some Western Australians have called for the adoption of an opt-out model. Both opt-in and opt-out models require family consent.

Only 38 per cent of eligible Western Australians are registered on the Australian Organ Donor Register. The registration rate does not necessarily reflect the current level of support for organ donation in the community. Australian attitudes to, and perspectives of, an opt-out system should be ascertained. Any legislative change must avoid eroding public trust, would require thorough communication with the public and should include culturally and religiously sensitive outreach. Although it is possible for a state jurisdiction to adopt an opt-out model, an evidence-based, nationally consistent approach is preferable.

The committee makes recommendations to improve registration and consent rates in Western Australia, including the reintroduction of using Western Australian driver's licences and photo cards as a pathway to register on the Australian Organ Donor Register. The committee also recommends equipping hospitals with machine perfusion technology, which would improve organ utilisation rates and increase transport time frames. Many misconceptions, myths and misunderstandings surrounding organ and tissue donation should be addressed through public education.

This report makes 34 findings and 26 recommendations, and the committee sincerely thanks all those who contributed to this inquiry and, most importantly, all donor families for their selfless generosity.

I commend the report to the house.