

Private Submission Mr Nicholas Fardell - Inquiry into Organ and Tissue donation in Western Australia

Recently was diagnosed with a blood cancer and unfortunately as a result I became acutely aware of the need for blood transfusion services. At this point I require a transfusion every fortnight and soon will be lining up for a stem cell transplant which should see me right. It's a sad admission that I was not aware of the increasing need for these transfusion services, so I started researching. In this research I have been assisted by my local MP, the member for Kalgoorlie, Ms Ali Kent and many others. It was Ms Kent that brought this committee to my attention. Although this committee is looking extensively at Organ donation as I require a stem cell transplant, I consider this and the lack of Blood plasma to be in the same dire situation as organ donations. By rectifying one issue the other issues associated could well be solved.

It is worth noting that as a blood cancer patient I will never be able to donate blood products, With the rising number of blood cancer patients the list of people able to donate organs will also presumably decline as well.

I am heartened by contacting Ms Kent as she has been able to fact check and directed me to Standing Committee on Public Administration and this Inquiry into organ and tissue donation in Western Australia, when we look at each listed objective the committee is assessing:

- a. the effectiveness of the current model for organ and tissue donation in Western Australia
- b. issues impacting organ and tissue donation rates in Western Australia
- c. opportunities to improve organ and tissue donation rates in Western Australia
- d. any other matters considered relevant by the Committee.

By increasing access to blood donation services there will undoubtedly be a follow-on effect to organ donations. At a time of making donations the public can be asked to register or consider registering on the Australian Organ Donor Register and paperwork completed and submitted.

Fact: more than 8.3 million Australians, or one in three, will need to receive a blood donation in their lifetime only three per cent of Australians donate blood

With blood donations, Australia like many countries does have seasonal highs and lows due to many factors and like many we see the ads and wonder how much the Red Cross spends advertising for blood and plasma donors, currently we see this advertising blitz across WA TV every day.

As I have been researching this, I was unaware Australia received the majority of its "Top Up Blood" from America, that the Red Cross – Lifeblood, cannot collect. I looked at the Gambling capital of America, Las Vegas - Nevada and found that Blood donors could earn Staggering amounts essentially and presumably paid for by Australian tax payers. That disturbed me for many reasons, notably the results of the WA Royal Commission in to the casino results, (and none more so than the thought I might be receiving Donald Trump's blood, however unlikely he would give something away and support those less fortunate).

"Right now, people can expect about \$500 for the first month's donation as a qualified donor," Keen said. There are five CSL Plasma Centers in Las Vegas and one in Henderson. A person can donate up to two times in one week and make about \$500 for a month's worth of donations. Copyright 2023 Nexstar Media Inc.

So, its disturbing that Americans who are suffering cost of living pressures and gambling addictions are seemingly being subsidised by Australian Tax payers. Surely our federal and state governments would pay our pensioners and unemployed who are in increasing numbers sleeping in cars if they are lucky or park benches as is happening in Fremantle and the Perth CBD, not to mention Kalgoorlie

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and other regional centres. We have repeatedly heard politicians talk to the cost-of-living pressures and it seems feasible that this committee would recommend the possibility of a financial reward for those enrolling for organ donations at the same time as making a plasma or stem cell donation. It works in Nevada and is seemingly paid for by Australian tax payers.

However, it is against the law to be compensated for giving blood products and presumably organs. However, Life blood have recently decided to hand out gifts for donating blood. I would like to see this gift program extended to help alleviate real cost of living pressures. This could mean the \$400 rebate the state government gave those for power prices relief before the last election be extended to those that donate blood products or register on the Australian Organ Donor Register.

Then the next issue that confronted me has been the lack of collection services in WA. Blood collection is a monopolistic situation across Australia run by the Red Cross through Life Blood, the same organisation that took approx. \$11 million from the bushfire appeal in administration costs from a possible \$116 million donated by governments, public companies and private individuals. Competition is non-existent and the collection costs are seemingly exorbitant compared to other countries. Like most monopolies the need for restraint is often overlooked when you have your hand in the public purse. We all see the TV ads but the reality is the collection to me seems inefficient and haphazard. Pathwest's role could surely be extended to include this role and this needs to be assessed as a priority.

WA is the only major state **without** a mobile blood and plasma collection service, the other states that don't have pop up clinics and mobile services are the NT and Tasmania the 2 acknowledged basket cases of financial management in Australia as per the GST distribution which the premier talks about. An embarrassing fact people of WA must surely agree. The federal government funds the National Blood Authority who in turn fund Lifeblood run by the Red Cross, 67% federal and the state 33% so it seems that other states allocate funding to the monopoly allows them to have pop up clinics for blood collection and mobile collection services, even the GST non-contributing state of SA has a mobile service. The biggest disappointment about the collection centres is not the fact that WA is wealthy with a huge budget surplus it is the fact so many **WA citizens in regional areas are denied the chance to help**. WA has Australia's most generous population; I have people on the Goldfields who want to donate, which I'm sure Ms Kent could attest to, and when you mention these issues, we are inundated with stories of people heartbroken that they cannot contribute. I am sure other members of the committee that have connections to regional population centres would be able to tell similar stories. I know my battle has encouraged some people to try to donate and register for Bone Marrow, Plasma and Blood donations only to find that if you live in 4/5 of this state your services are not wanted but we continually advertise for them and continue to pay Americans for similar services.

Which leads me to adding organ donations to our licenses again like it used to be, this service should be reinstated at the time of applying for a license as the details are collected at the time forwarded to the Australian Organ Donor Register, a simple tick the box exercise. There was a legal issue, in 2015.

family refusal prevented 38% of potential donations proceeding

Under current law, there is nothing an individual can do to ensure a relative will not override their wish to donate after their death. But there should be.

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We should put an end to this practise, I would suggest that the great minds that solved the Clive Palmer billions lawsuit also turn their heads to solving this issue if in fact there are any. Surely lives of Western Australians are more important than a Queenslander that has access to a mobile donation clinic that Western Australians don't. Please change the laws to allow this to be a tick and flick to happen again, this lines up with recent sentiments/rights around changes to the Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation recently celebrated in Western Australia.

We can also investigate the possibility to increase donations and registrations for Organs, Blood , Plasma and Stem cell or Bone Marrow for that those people registering and donating would receive priority placement on the registers if they in turn need these services. We could actually see an increase in registrations for rare blood types and hard to access organs.

We also need to consultate with the RFDS around transportation, the RFDS should be allowed to carry deceased passengers and organs for this purpose of donations, it is still lifesaving work, just not for the poor soul's organs they are carrying to a recipient. I know the RFDS has carried patients to organs, Perth to Melbourne and Sydney. The new jets are perfect for this. This could open up another stream of potential organ donors and supporters that currently support the RFDS.

So, I'm wondering how we raise money for collection services in regional areas. One way seems to be the \$1000 million dollar fund collected by the WA treasurer from the mining companies. Or to find inefficiencies in Life Blood and reduce their collection costs to be inline with other countries and at the same time introduce some competition against Life Blood which could be at the new super clinics which are yet to come online in WA, or the many medical clinics we have funded by mining companies which seemingly popped up across the state during covid-19 and investigate PathWest as collection centres. Then we add donations back to our licenses and either way a combination of these options should see the funding available for Pop Up clinics regionally or mobile collection services introduce by the state government which will increase their rate of people allowing them to register at the same time on the Australian Organ Donor Register.

If any questions arise around this submission, please do not hesitate to contact myself.

Nicholas Fardell

Notes:

<https://theconversation.com/how-australia-can-fix-the-market-for-plasma-and-save-millions-101609>.

Robert.Slonim@uts.edu.au

<https://www.8newsnow.com/news/local-news/everything-you-need-to-know-about-donating-plasma-in-the-las-vegas-valley/>

<https://www.hospitalhealth.com.au/content/clinical-services/news/the-conversation-three-ethical-ways-to-increase-organ-donation-in-australia-1021112558>

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<https://www.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddying>

<https://thewest.com.au/news/health/misconceptions-hindering-blood-donations-c-7207396>

<https://www.lifeblood.com.au/news-and-stories/media-centre/media-releases/lifeblood-gifts-program-boost-donations>