

## ORGAN DONATION



Picture: EUGENE HYLAND NO8WH996

## Second chance at life beckons teen

IMAGINE you have just run around a football oval and need to catch your breath.

That is what breathing is like every day for 15-year-old Coen Ashton, pictured, of Docklands.

Coen has cystic fibrosis, which has damaged both of his lungs. And he needs a double lung transplant as soon as possible.

He has been on the organ waiting list for nine months.

While he waits for that important phone call, Coen must take up to 60 tablets a day, breathe oxygen through a machine at night and take antibiotics to keep him alive.

Half of Coen's life has been spent inside hospitals and he hopes regular

hospital visits will soon come to an end. "If I get a new set of lungs I'll be able to have a second chance at life," he said.

It is a wonder Coen can still be so positive after what he has to go through every day, but he still manages to inspire the people around him.

"My motto is to live every day like it's your last," he said. "Life itself is an amazing adventure."

DonateLife Victoria state medical director Dr Helen Opdam said one of the reasons people waited so long for an organ transplant was because donating organs had not been discussed.



See video of Coen Ashton's daily struggle while he waits for a new set of lungs at [berwickleader.com.au](http://berwickleader.com.au)

You can now show that you are a registered organ and tissue donor on your Facebook Timeline. Click on life event, select health and wellness and choose organ donor.

# Kids' lives on hold

There are 18 children in Victoria waiting for organ transplants. There has never been a better time to start talking about becoming a donor, **Kylie Adoranti** reports

NINE livers, two kidneys, six hearts and one set of lungs.

Each figure represents a young life and a family waiting for the potentially life-saving phone call. The children waiting for these organs are among 1563 patients across Australia waiting for transplants.

Yet only 2 per cent of people who die in hospital can donate their organs.

Organ donors need to die in hospital where their bodies can be kept on a ventilator until the organs can be harvested — and consent by the donors or their families must be given.

Last year, there were 337 deceased organ donors.

Waiting lists are managed by transplant units in each state. When an organ becomes available for donation, a DonateLife donor co-ordinator passes the information to transplant units in that state. There are several criteria in matching organs and tissue and potential donation recipients.

The number of people who have received organ and tissue transplants has jumped in the past five years — from 626 in 2007 to 1001 last year.

DonateLife Victoria state medical director Dr Helen Opdam (pictured above) said the donor rate could be im-

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— DR HELEN OPDAM, DONATELIFE VICTORIA STATE MEDICAL DIRECTOR

proved if more people talked about organ donation.

“The number of organ donors has increased through building capacity within our health system, with dedicated staff within hospitals, and raising community awareness and the importance of family discussion with the community,” Dr Opdam said.

She said it was important for people to discuss with family about becoming organ donors and if a child's organs would be donated if something were to happen.

“Once a child passes away, parents often have only hours to think about donating their child's organs,” Dr Opdam said. “There is a timeframe in which parents can make that decision.”

“This is why it is incredibly important to talk about it before.”



Picture: JANE OLLERENSHAW NO8WH997



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