

21<sup>st</sup> August, 2012

## Media Release

### THE GREATEST GIFT

**Seven Australians are about to embark on a gruelling relay from Melbourne to Sydney – and all to help a mate promote ‘The Greatest Gift’.**

Paul Bourke, a Sydney father of three young children, will lead a team of runners north along the Hume Highway to honour his late wife Suzette, who tragically died of a brain aneurism in 2010.

Suzette had signed the Australian Organ Donor Register and her decision to become a donor saved the lives of six other Australians. Rather than simply honour her wish, Paul has since dedicated his life to promoting organ and tissue donation and the importance of discussing your donation wishes with your loved ones.

Paul, whose relay ‘The Greatest Gift’ will be held in honour of Suzette and her decision, said that while he was looking forward to the physical challenge of running in relay from Melbourne to Sydney, the most important thing was the promotion of the donation message.

“We’ve all been training for this for months, but it’s not just about us. No one ever wants to be faced with the decision to donate their loved ones organs, but if you know their wishes it makes that decision so much easier,” Mr Bourke said.

“If what we’re doing can encourage more Australians, particularly young Australians, to have that discussion with their friends and families then all the hard work will have been worth it.”

The Greatest Gift will start at Federation Square in Melbourne on Monday August 27 and finish in Sydney on Friday August 31 at Chipping Norton Public School, the school that Paul’s children attend.

The Greatest Gift is being conducted with the help and in support of Transplant Australia, the national community voice for all those affected by organ donation and transplantation.

Chris Thomas, CEO of Transplant Australia, said that all Australians should take up the message that Paul and his team are promoting.

“What Paul and his team are doing is an absolutely fantastic cause and Transplant Australia is behind them every step of the way. Right now, 1563 Australians are waiting for a life-saving organ transplant so it’s crucial that all Australians make their wishes regarding organ donation known to their families and loved ones,” said

Mr Chris Thomas.

Ms Yael Cass, CEO of the Organ and Tissue Authority said, "Paul's generosity in promoting organ and tissue donation demonstrates the extraordinary good that can come from a family tragedy."

"I thank Paul for taking on this challenge to inspire fellow Australians to discover, decide and discuss organ and tissue donation, and I wish him and the other runners the very best of luck" Ms Cass said.

The Greatest Gift is proudly supported by the St George Foundation and Interlink Roads and will serve to raise awareness for the upcoming 13<sup>th</sup> Australian Transplant Games, to be held in Newcastle from September 29 to October 06.

For more information on transplants visit [www.transplant.org.au](http://www.transplant.org.au)

For more information on organ donation visit [www.donatelife.gov.au](http://www.donatelife.gov.au)

### **About Transplant Australia**

Transplant Australia is the national community organisation promoting organ and tissue donation and caring for all those touched by transplantation. Its vision is for Australia to lead the world in organ and tissue donation and transplantation - saving lives, improving quality of life and providing much-needed care and support.

Transplant Australia receives support from the Australian Sports Commission and the Organ and Tissue Authority.

### **About the Australian Transplant Games**

The Australian Transplant Games are held every two years and celebrate the success of transplantation and encourage Australian families to discuss organ and tissue donation. They are open to transplant recipients, donor families, living donors, people on dialysis or awaiting a transplant and supporters.

The Organ and Tissue Authority is the major sponsor of the Australian Transplant Games. NSW Health is the major partner of the Games.

### **Further Information:**

Please contact Sean Golding at Transplant Australia on 02 9922 5400 or 0417 444 188