



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* ADELAIDE



Flinders  
University



University of  
South Australia

Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences

# Body Donation Program



# **The Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences (FHMS) at the University of Adelaide operates a central mortuary facility on behalf of the universities in South Australia for the acceptance of all bodies donated to science and controls the transfer of anatomical resources to licensed schools of anatomy within the State and Commonwealth in support of teaching, training, scientific studies and research.**

Donating your body to science is one of the greatest gifts one can give to make a lasting contribution to the education and training of our current and future health professionals and to advance science through research. Historically, South Australians have been most generous in their support of our Body Donation Program and we consistently have one of the highest donation rates per capita in Australasia.

The opportunity to be able to dissect the human body is a privilege not available in many parts of the world and this is reflected through the quality of our graduates and the world class training and research conducted within the Universities in South Australia.

This leaflet will provide you and your family with detailed answers to the most common questions we are asked about the donation of one's body to science. It also contains the most important information for a prospective donor and their family to understand, in order to make the decision to go ahead with the donation.

We have chosen to be as open and frank as possible in our answers and whilst you may find some of the information confronting, it is our responsibility to ensure that you understand what will happen when you donate. By law, the Universities must ensure that your consent is "FULLY INFORMED".

Please take the time to read and understand the information and remember, if you do not understand any of the information or if you decide for any reason that body donation is not right for you, **DO NOT SIGN THE CONSENT FORMS.**

If you have any other queries about any of the information contained within, please contact Body

Donation Program, The University of Adelaide on 8313 5998 and one of our staff will be happy to organise a time to call back and talk with you further.

## **Q1: What is the relevant State legislation that allows for a person to donate their body to science?**

In South Australia, the Transplantation and Anatomy Act, 1983\*, Part V, allows members of the public to unconditionally donate their body for use in teaching, training, scientific studies and research, in any licensed institution in the Commonwealth.

\*Copies of the Transplantation and Anatomy Act, 1983 can be obtained from the internet at: [legislation.sa.gov.au](http://legislation.sa.gov.au)

## **Q2: How do I register my intention to donate my body to science?**

You can register your intention to donate your body to science in four (4) easy steps:

- Read and understand the information contained in this leaflet.
- Discuss your intentions with your next of kin, family or executor and ensure they agree (we advise that they read and understand this leaflet too).
- Sign and have witnessed, two (2) copies of the Body Donation Consent Form, along with the Senior Available Next of Kin Form (both available from the Body Donation Program Office)
- Forward one (1) copy of the completed Body Donation Consent Form along with the Senior Available Next of Kin Form to the University at the address given on the

consent form. Keep one copy of the consent form for your records.

### **Q3: Can my family donate my body on my behalf?**

YES. In the absence of a signed and witnessed consent, the University of Adelaide can accept the donation of a deceased's body from the senior most available next of kin, provided they sign a Body Donation Consent Form (in the presence of witnesses), on behalf of the deceased. The completed Body Donation consent form **MUST** be received by the University before the donor can be transported for a physical assessment. It is the responsibility of the senior available next of kin to ensure that the immediate family agree to the donation when signing on behalf of the family and the deceased.

NB: The University always acts in good faith when accepting a body donation consent from the senior available next of kin on behalf of the deceased and cannot be held liable for any false, incorrect or misleading information.

### **Q4: What are the two types of Body Donation?**

You have two (2) choices: Under a Type 1 Donation your body is donated unconditionally to the University and will be used in teaching, training, scientific studies and research for an indefinite time period. The remains, when no longer required will be cremated at the University's expense. (Please read Questions 14, 15 & 16 for more information).

Under a Type 2 Donation your body is also donated unconditionally to the University to be used in teaching, training, scientific studies and research, however the remains, when no longer required, will be released to the senior available next of kin's chosen Funeral Director for private cremation or burial at the family's expense. (Please read Question 15 for information on timeframes of use by donation type).

### **Q5: If I've signed my consent form and I die, will the University definitely accept my body?**

NO. A signed consent form does NOT guarantee acceptance. The donation becomes official only after the physical acceptance of the body in our mortuary facility (including a signed Death Certificate or Coroners release form). Acceptance is dependent on a number of factors including the condition of the body at the time of death. (These conditions are outlined in Question 9)

### **Q6: Once I've signed my form, can I or anyone else revoke my consent?**

YES. If you, as the intending donor, change your mind, you may revoke your consent in writing to Body Donation Program at any time.

You also need to be aware that your next of kin **CAN** override your wishes after your death and revoke your consent, **PRIOR** to the physical acceptance of the body at the University. It is therefore essential your family know and understand your wishes and agree to carry them through. If the senior available next of kin decides to revoke the consent after your death, the University **MUST** abide by their wishes. However, after the final acceptance of the body by the University, the donation is final and **CANNOT** be revoked.

### **Q7: If The University of Adelaide says they can't accept my body for any reason, can I donate my body to another University in South Australia?**

NO. The Body Donation Program at the University of Adelaide operates a central mortuary facility on behalf of the Universities in South Australia for the acceptance of all bodies donated to science, and controls the transfer of anatomical resources to licensed schools of anatomy within the State and Commonwealth in support of teaching, training, scientific studies and research. These anatomical resources are regularly transferred to other licensed schools by qualified contractors, either in the form of whole bodies, parts or specifically prepared teaching specimens.



## Q8: If the University has my signed consent, what happens after my death?

After the death of a potential donor, the Body Donation Program must be contacted immediately by the next of kin or by medical or nursing staff to check our final selection criteria (see Question 9 for more information). Unless immediately deemed unsuitable, the body (if within a 40km radius of the Adelaide CBD) will be transferred to our Mortuary by the University's contracted Funeral transfer company at no cost to the family (Please read Question 11 for more information). A physical inspection of the body by our staff will then determine final acceptance. University staff may also require additional information from either the next of kin or medical/nursing staff in order to ascertain suitability. Body donation program staff will arrange for the collection of the 'Death Certificate' and 'First and Second Medical Certificates' or Coroner's 'Authority to Dispose of Human Remains' (required by law for the issuing of a Cremation permit) and will also register the death with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. This will be at no cost to the family.

As it may be years before any remains may be released, the family may also choose to memorialise their loved one at this time by conducting a memorial service, placing a memorial within the cemetery of their choice, or even privately. If required, the University will also provide the chosen cemetery with written proof of the acceptance of the Donation.

NB: If a family chooses to use a Funeral Director other than the University contracted company to transfer the body or organise the collection of Certificates or Cremation Permits, the family will be liable to that Funeral Director for any charges incurred.

## Q9: What conditions will prevent the University from accepting my body?

Whilst we reject some donations, the University accepts over 85% of intended body donations when we are notified of a death in the required timeframe.

We may not be able to accept the donation if the intending donor:

- has been deceased for more than three (3) days\*
- has any communicable diseases that may be passed on after death (eg. HIV, Hep A, B or C, TB, MRSA, VRE, COVID-19)
- has been significantly altered by certain medical conditions or procedures\*, including amputation\*
- has undergone an autopsy\*
- has undergone whole organ donation\*
- has Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), dementia of unknown cause, spent six months or more within the United Kingdom between the years 1980 to 1996 or is suspected of having communicable diseases
- has jaundice\*
- has died within 24 hours of a surgical procedure or discharge from a hospital
- is obese or emaciated\*

OR DUE TO

- body storage limitations
- planned university shutdowns (e.g. Christmas/New Year break).

\*NB: These conditions/procedures DO NOT immediately exclude you from our program. The University may make exceptions in some cases, as each donation will be assessed on a case by case basis.

## Q10: If my body is not suitable for any reason, what happens then?

If the body is not suitable for donation, the senior available next of kin will be notified ASAP so they can make alternative funeral arrangements. It is incumbent upon the next of kin to notify the University of the death ASAP so that we may determine suitability.

As we can never guarantee acceptance, The University of Adelaide cannot be held liable for any costs incurred through the rejection of a donation for any reason.



## Q11: If my body is suitable for body donation what happens then?

The body is transported by our contracted Funeral transfer company to the mortuary of the Ray Last Anatomy Laboratory, The University of Adelaide at no cost to the next of kin (if accepted and within a 40km radius of the Adelaide CBD). The University is unable to pay for transport of a body from further than 40km from the Adelaide CBD.

If the family or executor wishes to pay for the transfer of a body over a distance greater than 40km, a rate may be negotiated with a Funeral Director of their choosing, with the expense borne by the next of kin or executor.

Once accepted, the body will either undergo an embalming process that will preserve the tissues in a sterile condition OR be sealed in a plastic bag and immediately frozen. The body will then either be placed into a secure refrigerated facility or a secure freezer facility until required. The studies of an embalmed body may extend over a number of years and in some cases, selected parts will be kept indefinitely for continuous use in teaching, training, scientific studies and research. The use of an un-embalmed frozen body will generally be for a shorter timeframe, however selected parts may also be kept indefinitely for use in teaching, training, scientific studies and research.

## Q12: How is my body going to be used and why are some parts kept, even when the rest of the remains are being released?

As the consent form states, the Universities intend to “use the body in whatever way is deemed most beneficial to science”. You must be aware that:

- We WILL utilise the body as completely as possible for teaching, training, scientific studies and research in any licensed school of anatomy in the Commonwealth;
- Some parts MAY be kept indefinitely being plastinated, displayed or retained for teaching, training, scientific studies or research;
- Any remains that may cause a potential risk to staff or students WILL be disposed

of through a registered waste disposal company and thus will NOT be released with the rest of the remains when they are no longer required;

- Once in the University system, the “whole” body can never be released for interment, only the “remains” no longer required.

So that there is no misconception as to how the body may be used, some examples of parts that may be removed and kept indefinitely for teaching, training scientific studies and research or disposed of as waste are:

- Sections of the body dissected and/or plastinated to display muscles, ligaments, nerves and vessels, labeled and used in teaching over many years;
- Sections of the body, individual bones, organs or muscles removed for research into certain conditions or diseases, or to better understand the anatomy of a specific region;
- Body fluids, blood, bone, fat and fascia removed during routine dissection, surgical training or the demonstration of new and innovative surgical approaches is usually disposed of.

The retention of some parts of the donated body is critical to ensure that we carry through with your wishes to use the body as completely as possible to further advance science. In addition, the University must always protect the health and safety of our staff, students and current health professionals through the timely disposal of any fluids or tissues from the remains of a donor which may cause a potential health risk.

The Department of Health (SA) oversees some aspects of the University’s receipt, custody and subsequent interment procedures, and we use numbered identification tag systems together with corresponding registers to identify the donor’s remains. As the University retains parts indefinitely, there will always be some cases where tissues or specimens from a donor can no longer be identified, either through extensive use or deterioration, or because they were removed

to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff. Unidentified material is NEVER mixed with the identifiable remains of a donor and WILL always be disposed of as biological waste.

**IMPORTANT:** If you have any issues with regard to your body being dissected, remains being sectioned, parts being kept for ongoing display or teaching, or with parts being used by The University of Adelaide or other licensed institutions for teaching or research, then we advise you NOT to proceed with donating your body as this IS how your remains will be used.

### **Q13: What is the procedure for releasing the remains when they are no longer required?**

The remains are placed in a named and numbered coffin and the Department of Health notified in writing of the intended release. An inspection of the remains is carried out by an Authorised Officer of the Body Donation Program and release registers signed, after which the remains can be transferred by the contracted Funeral transfer company for either cremation, at the University's expense (as explained below) or for private interment at the family's expense. This release of remains will occur at the discretion of the University. In the case of Type 1 donations, your next of kin will be notified of the release after the cremation has taken place. For Type 2 donations, the next of kin will be notified at the time of the release so they may oversee funeral arrangements with a Funeral Director of their choice.

### **Q14: Why do the Universities cremate the remains under a Type 1 donation?**

Previously all people who donated their bodies to science in South Australia under a Type 1 donation were buried in the Science Park section of a cemetery chosen by the University.

The location of this cemetery has changed a number of times over the past century. Since October 2007, with 70% of the community now favouring cremation over burial, any person donating their body under a Type 1 donation is cremated rather than buried.

### **Q15: How long will it take to release the remains no longer required for use?**

Whether a Type 1 or Type 2 Donation, the Universities cannot guarantee a specific timeframe within which a donor's remains may be released. This is because in some cases, a person's body may prove to be of great scientific interest and we may wish to use the body for an extended period of time.

Under a Type 1 Donation, if the University requires a body for an indefinite period of time, specific consent would be obtained from the next of kin. The reality is, however, that the majority of remains are usually used by the Universities within approximately 3 years of acceptance and subsequently released.

In the case of a Type 2 Donation, the Universities will endeavour to use the body in areas such as surgical training, where we make every effort to release the remains within 2-3 years (this timeframe could infrequently be as short as 6 months). For Type 2 Donations, the University will notify the next of kin and the chosen Funeral Director when the remains are ready for release.

### **Q16: If the remains 'no longer required' are to be cremated, will my family have the ashes returned and if so, what ashes will be left if the Universities have kept parts of my body for continued use in advancing science?**

Since October 2007, the Universities cremate any remains released (subject to obtaining appropriate cremation consents) and offer the next of kin the return of the ashes free of charge. The ashes are kept in a secured area for a maximum of 12 months from the date of cremation. If no advice for the return of the ashes is received within the 12 month period, the ashes will be interred in a site dedicated to those that have generously bequeathed their body to medical science at no cost to the family.

Depending upon how much of the body has been retained by the Universities for ongoing use, the family should understand that the amount of ashes received may vary.



### **Q17: What if my family wants to have a Memorial Service?**

Your relatives may wish to organise a memorial service either privately or through their chosen Funeral Director when your body is in the process of being assessed for acceptance by the University. Your next of kin should be made aware that the body can only be present at a private memorial service, provided the time from the death to the service does not fall outside of the acceptance criteria outlined in Question 9. They will also be responsible for any costs incurred through a private memorial service.

Once a year in March, The University of Adelaide on behalf of the Universities in South Australia, holds a Memorial Service for our donors. This Service expresses the students' and the Universities' gratitude and recognises the significant and often difficult decision their families have made in carrying through with their loved ones wishes. Donor families and friends of donors are welcome to attend. We also encourage the attendance of our First Year students in order to underscore the privilege they have been given to study and dissect the human body, an opportunity not available in many parts of the world.

### **Q18: What if I or my family needs more information before making a decision?**

If you have any further queries about any aspect of the information contained within, please contact the Body Donation Program Office at The University of Adelaide on 8313 5998 and one of our staff will be happy to organise a time to call back and talk with you further.





#### **Kurna acknowledgement**

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Kurna people, the original custodians of the Adelaide Plains and the land on which the University of Adelaide's campuses at North Terrace, Waite, and Roseworthy are built. We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of the Kurna people to country and we respect and value their past, present and ongoing connection to the land and cultural beliefs. The University continues to develop respectful and reciprocal relationships with all Indigenous peoples in Australia, and with other Indigenous peoples throughout the world.

#### **Further enquiries**

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