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23 May 2011

Richard Willis
The Secretary
Legal and Social Issues Committee
Legislative Council, Parliament House
Spring Street VIC 3002

Dear Mr Willis

Thank you for asking the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) for their input into increasing organ donation in the Victorian Jewish community and for the extension granted for this submission.

The JCCV is the roof body of Victorian Jewry, Australia's largest Jewish community. With fifty-eight major communal organisations as its affiliates, the JCCV represents the religious, political, cultural, welfare, educational, religious and social associations operating in Victoria, providing leadership and a voice for Victorian Jewry's 60,000 members.

After an extensive community consultation, we have provided a summary below in response to "*other matters that should be considered in relation to mechanisms to increase organ donation in Victoria.*" Please note that *Halacha* or *Halachic* refers to Jewish law and the way Jews live their lives, be it from a religious or traditional perspective. Also note, the Jewish community is very diverse and ranges in its religious views from ultra-orthodox to secular.

- *As such the issue of organ donation in the Jewish community is extremely complex and community members considering organ donation would be advised to consult their own rabbi or an alternatively competent Halachic authority for a ruling on the matter.*
- *The JCCV opposes the concept of presumed consent in the context of cadaveric organ donation.*
- *Jewish people recognise the importance of saving human life and view positively the act of life-saving organ donation within the parameters of Halacha (Jewish law).*
- *Some members of the Jewish community would support organ donation in almost every case, so long as it does not involve a lethal threat to the life of the donor.*

Increasing organ donation in the Jewish community is possible and desirable, but at times complex. The committee must understand that it is not simply a secular issue based on an individual's ethics and values but is a highly complex religious issue based in *Halacha*.

We wish you good luck in your endeavours.

Yours sincerely

John Searle
President