



Hon Michael Gallacher MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Minister for the Hunter

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW POLICE AND HEALTH LAUNCH TIME-SAVING SYSTEM FOR ORGAN TRANSFERS

The NSW Police Force and NSW Health have today launched a time saving system for police and medical practitioners to coordinate urgent organ transportation.

Minister for Police and Emergency Services Michael Gallacher said the joint response will allow a single point of contact for police and medical practitioners to coordinate the urgent transport of organs, ultimately saving time and saving lives.

The new single-call process will mean a 'one stop shop' system that will come into effect on January 1, 2012.

"The majority of medical runs have increased over recent times, from trauma hospitals across the state requesting police assistance in organ transport with an average of 75 urgent medical escorts conducted by NSW Police each year," Minister Gallacher said.

NSW Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione says every second counts when it comes to organ transfers, so it is essential that we deliver this precious cargo with urgency and safety.

"Every urgent transport completed by police so far, has been achieved without incident and we are keen to keep it this way and to improve our service to the community even more," Commissioner Scipione said.

Health Minister Jillian Skinner said this new process is essential in keeping up with community needs and will mean that organ deliveries are fast-tracked to assist both police and medical professionals to save lives.

"NSW Police and NSW Health have worked collaboratively for over twenty years to provide patients across the state with this life-saving organ transport service.

NSW State Medical Director, Dr Robert Herkes said NSW Health is committed to working jointly with police and support this new initiative.

"We saw a 23% increase in organ donation across New South Wales in 2010. We urge the community to have a family discussion about organ donation and help us save even more lives in NSW.

The practice was introduced when the late Dr Victor Chang – considered by many as a pioneer of modern day heart transplantation – requested assistance from the NSW Police Force to revolutionise the way in which organs could most efficiently be transported from donor to recipient.

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EMERGENCY MEDICAL TRANSFERS – THE FACTS:

- It was the late Dr Victor Chang who, in 1984, asked the NSW Police Force to become involved in the transportation of organs. His aim was to cut the time between the donor organ being harvested and transported to the recipient; enabling a greater chance of success.
- Since then, NSW Police Force has been working closely with the NSW Organ and Tissue Donation Service, Road Traffic Authority and many hospitals in NSW to ensure the successful co-ordination of Emergency Medical Transfers (EMT).
- Before each transport, NSW Police Force Highway Patrol officers and the doctor in charge will discuss the gravity and seriousness of the situation and determine the police response required. Urgency determinations can be upgraded or downgraded en route.
- The first Emergency Medical Transfer (EMT) was completed by now-retired police officers, Tony McCue and Daryl Irvin, for the late Dr Victor Chang on 28 October 1984, and ran from Sydney's Kingsford Smith Airport to St Vincent's Hospital.
- On this initial run NSW police officers manned every intersection to ensure the safe arrival of the organs and the medical team. With the RTA becoming involved and technology advancing this has allowed police to get a 'green light' corridor to increase safety and minimise disruption to the public.
- The emergency medical transports that the NSWPF are involved in do not always involve organs. On some occasions it may be the transport of a rare blood type or surgical prosthesis where the patient is already on the operating table.
- Many of the recipients have no idea NSW Police are involved in the organ transport process.
- As many as 10 people can benefit from the organ and tissue donation of just one person.
- Australia has one of the highest transplant success rates in the world.
- Since 1990 Senior Constable Stewart Bailey has been the liaison officer for the medical escorts and plays a key role with stakeholders to ensure a safe and successful transportation. Snr Cst Bailey alone has been involved in more than 200 EMTs.