



*****Media release*****

Transplant pioneers recognised in Australia Day honours

Austin Health's director of the Liver Transplant Unit, Professor Bob Jones, and Board member Professor David Scott, have both been awarded AMs in the Australia Day honours for their contribution to medicine.

Professor Jones performed Victoria's first liver transplant in 1988, paediatric liver transplant in 1988 and split liver transplant – using a portion of a mother's liver to save the life of her one-year old son - in 2007.

He is also a strong advocate for organ donation – something he said comes from his direct experience of seeing lives lost.

"One of the most frustrating things is to have a patient dying here in need of a donor. Perhaps 15 per cent of the people on our waiting list are going to die before getting a transplant," Professor Jones said.

He said that when he started as a surgeon in the 1980s, liver transplantation was pioneering and much more dangerous for the patient.

"A significant number of our patients died no matter what we did. But as they were dying anyway, we knew we had no other option than to proceed, so that's what drove us ahead," Professor Jones said.

"Now that we've become more established, we know who to transplant and who not to transplant, and we have a much better range of drugs to treat patients more effectively," he said.

"Our first paediatric transplant, in late 1988, was very high risk, but that young woman has now grown up and has three children of her own," he said.

He and his team are about to face those same challenges again – as well as the same potential to save lives – by attempting Australia's first intestinal transplant, something Professor Jones said will happen as soon as the right donor organ becomes available.

Professor Jones has directed the Liver Transplant Unit since its inception, which today provides liver transplant services to all of Victoria, Tasmania and parts of southern New South Wales. The team has now performed more than 650 transplants and enjoys some of the best outcomes in the world.

Austin Health's chief executive officer, Dr Brendan Murphy, said that Professor Jones is also remarkable for the respect and affection he gains from everyone who meets him – including colleagues, students, but particularly his patients.

"Professor Jones is deeply admired by all who are privileged to meet and work with him. His patients adore him and he is always attentive and sincere," Dr Murphy said.

Austin Health Board member Professor David Scott was also awarded an AM in the Australia Day honours, for his services to transplantation and other leadership positions in health.

In his time as Head of Transplant Surgery at Monash University and the Monash Medical Centre, Professor Scott was instrumental in research looking at prolonging organ storage. He is now chair of the Austin Health Board Clinical Quality and Safety Committee.

Chief executive officer, Dr Brendan Murphy, said that the award is a fitting achievement.

"Professor Scott is a tireless advocate of high quality patient care and strong clinical leadership in health. We are proud to have him on our governance team," Dr Murphy said.