



## **\*\*\*Media release\*\*\***

### **Liver Transplant Unit receives \$1.4m to add second surgical team**

Austin Health's Liver Transplant Unit will be able to employ a second surgical team, thanks to \$1.4 million in funding from the State Government.

The increase will allow them to perform more transplants, including more split liver transplants, in which two transplants are performed using a single donor organ.

Each split liver procedure has the potential to save two people's lives.

Liver Transplant Unit director, Professor Bob Jones said that they also put significant pressure onto the clinical team.

"It's become increasingly difficult to have teams available," Professor Jones said.

"You've got to have a team to retrieve the donor organs, a team to split it in half, and you've got to do two transplants. So it's effectively four operations...three operating rooms, three sets of nurses, two sets of anaesthetists, and a transplant operation can go from eight to 12 hours."

Health Minister Daniel Andrews came to the Austin Hospital in person last Tuesday to announce the funding and meet patients on the liver transplant waiting list.

The Victorian Liver Transplant Unit at Austin Heath has been the sole provider of liver transplant services for Victoria, Tasmania and Southern NSW since 1988. Last financial year, the unit performed 54 liver transplants.

Patient John Pollock welcomed the news that the funding would allow for more transplant operations, becoming close to tears several times while telling the minister of the emotional toll taken by being on the waiting list.

However, he had only praise for the Liver Transplant Unit.

"When I come in here I get a whole treatment team, and they're not just a good team: they're the best," Mr Pollock said.

Mr Andrews said that demand on the Victorian Liver Transplant Unit was growing due to an increased availability of donor livers, driven by investment in the national DonateLife campaign aimed at increasing organ donation rates.

“Organ transplants from Victorian donors saved 204 lives in 2009. Making sure your partner, family and friends know your wishes to donate is one of the most important steps you can take,” Mr Andrews said.