

Human Bequest Program

A lasting legacy

How do I donate my body to medical education and science?

IMPORTANCE OF BEQUESTS

Donating your body after death not only has great benefits for society but gives you, the donor, the knowledge that even after death you will continue to contribute to the education of many future health professionals. The James Cook University (JCU) Human Bequest Program depends entirely on the generosity of individuals who wish to donate their bodies. The program plays an essential role in training the healthcare practitioners of tomorrow, as well as providing scientists, clinicians and surgeons with the requisite knowledge and tools to further advance modern surgery and treatment programs. Those considering registering for the JCU Human Bequest Program should know that the need is great, consequently your gift will be significant and your generosity valued.

PURPOSE OF THE JCU PROGRAM?

The School of Anatomy at James Cook University, runs a donor bequest program to assist in the teaching of the anatomical sciences to North Queensland's future doctors, physiotherapists, dentists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, nurses, pharmacists, sports scientists and practitioners, and research scientists. Most donations are primarily used for teaching and will be subject to dissection and examination within the School of Anatomy. Retention of donors can be as long as ten years. Some donations however, are used specifically for short term surgical and medical research.

The use of human bodies for teaching and research is strictly governed by legislation, in particular Queensland Health's *Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1979* and *Transplantation and Anatomy Regulation 2017*.

Respect for those who have donated their body to the JCU Human Bequest Program is maintained at all times. The contribution that donors have made to education and science is fully acknowledged. The School of Anatomy facilities are situated in Townsville and Cairns, with access limited to authorised staff, students and visitors.

WHO CAN DONATE THEIR BODY?

Donations of whole bodies are accepted from across North Queensland as long as they are received by JCU within the required time frame. While prospective donors need to be over 18, there is no upper age limit.

The following conditions may prevent the university from accepting a donor:

- Distance and late notification of death
- Post mortem examinations or coroner's inquiry
- Certain notifiable infectious diseases
- Physical size and condition of the body
- Recent major surgery
- Sudden onset dementia
- Storage limitations at the university



PROCEDURE AFTER DEATH

At the time of death, the next-of-kin should notify the Human Bequest Coordinator by telephone as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours.

Once the Human Bequest Coordinator has completed the necessary checks based on the cause of death, a decision is made on whether the bequest can be accepted. If the university decides to accept the bequest, the Human Bequest Coordinator will make arrangements for the body to be transported by a professional funeral service provider to the Townsville campus, where it will be embalmed to preserve the tissues and prevent deterioration prior to use. At this time, the family can arrange and pay for a private memorial service if they wish to do so. If, for whatever reason, a bequest cannot be accepted, the family is advised to make private funeral arrangements. No financial obligation is accepted by JCU in these circumstances.

COST

JCU will cover the costs of the transport, cremation and disposal of the bequest, however, any donation that an individual wishes to include in their will would be gratefully received and acknowledged.

CONCLUSION OF THE PROGRAM

At the end of the period of examination, the body is cremated and the ashes returned to the next-of-kin, or scattered to the winds at Woongarra Crematorium. Selected parts may be retained indefinitely for continuing teaching or research purposes.

THANKSGIVING SERVICE

An official thanksgiving service is held every three years to commemorate those who have donated their body to medical education and science. Relatives and friends of donors, as well as students and staff of JCU are invited to attend these ceremonies.

REGISTERING

Individuals who are interested in registering for the JCU Human Bequest Program can contact the Human Bequest Coordinator or visit the webpage to download the relevant forms. Once the donor and next-of-kin are fully aware of the process, they should complete the forms and return them to the university.

A statement such as 'I wish, if circumstances at the time permit, to bequeath my body after death for the purposes of teaching and research under the Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1979 and direct that it be offered to the School of Anatomy at James Cook University', can be included in the will. It cannot make the bequest binding should a close family member object; even if the donor has completed the Human Bequest Consent Form and lodged a copy with their will. For this reason, it is suggested that all potential donors discuss their intentions with their family to ensure that no objections are raised at the time of death.

Once registered, the prospective donor will then receive a letter of registration and a donor card for themselves and their next-of-kin to keep in their purse or wallet.

For further details search 'Human Bequest Program' at www.jcu.edu.au, or contact:

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