

Blood cancer patients are dying waiting for a stem cell match

Current situation

Many patients with blood cancer & other disease require a blood stem cell match to undergo a stem cell/bone marrow transplant to survive

Unfortunately Australia's stem cell donor pool is shrinking and **we need the government to fund cheek swab testing to make it easier for people to join & save more lives!**

Current methods of joining the donor registry have failed to deliver the donor pool we need

People currently join the blood stem cell donor registry through a blood donation at Red Cross Lifeblood, unfortunately this method is failing:

- The global donor pool has **increased by 32%**, unfortunately Australia's donor pool has **shrunk by 3.5%**
- **Over 20,000 older potential stem cell donors will retire** from the Australian Registry by 2022, and the recruitment of blood donors through Red Cross Lifeblood is only expected to **replace around half of these**
- Most countries aim to recruit **2-3% of their population** as donors. Australia's pool of contactable donors is only around **0.5% of our population**
- Younger donors are crucial in finding the best matches for patients. The most populated age group in the global donor pool is **26-35 years of age**, in Australia it's **46-55 years of age**
- **85% of Australian patients** now depend on overseas stem cell donations. Other countries only rely on **half of their donations to come from overseas**. This is costly & the pandemic has created even more challenges, transporting stem cells between borders has never been more difficult

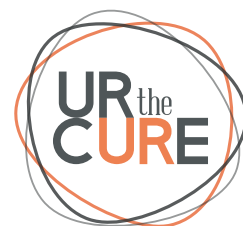
How you can help



Sign the petition



Send an email to our Health Ministers (Download template)



www.urthecure.com.au

Cheek swabs are the solution

Cheek swab testing make it easier & quicker for people to join the donor registry and allow us to build the donor pool we need to save more lives. They give us the ability to target the ideal donor groups; young, male and culturally diverse. This method has been used overseas for a long time; the only reason we do find 85% of our donations from overseas are because those countries adopted cheek swabs many years ago.



Cheek swab testing makes it easier & quicker for people to join the registry

- **Cheek swabs target young donors.** Younger stem cells perform better in a transplant. Young people interact with their world digitally now more than ever, cheek swab kits are ordered online and this online model is absolutely crucial to better target younger donors
- **Cheek swabs target males.** Males are the ideal donor because they produce more stem cells. Cheek swabs can directly target young males through community donors drives at places like sporting clubs. Only 4% of people currently on the donor registry are young males
- **Cheek swabs target culturally diverse & indigenous people.** Our donor pool is “too white” and not representative of Australia’s current population! Cheek swabs can directly target these groups through community donor drives (religious institutions such as Church, cultural festivals & more)
- **Cheek swabs recruit larger volumes of people.** Hundreds of people can join within 1 day at 1 event, these numbers are not possible with blood donation
- **Cheek swabs have simple eligibility requirements that reduce barriers to join.** Joining the donor registry through a blood donation creates eligibility barriers which have no relevance to stem cell donation (e.g. recent tattoos, male-to-male sex etc.)
- **Cheek swabs are cost effective.** It can cost in the vicinity of \$50,000 to import stem cells versus \$4,000 to use local cells. The funds we need to implement cheek swab testing are available but are stuck in red tape

Government inaction is costing lives

The needed funds to implement a cheek swab recruitment program have existed in a bank account for over 20 years, but cannot be used because of Commonwealth-imposed contractual constraints on the Australian Bone Marrow Donor Registry. At a Federal level the contract needs to be amended to allow access to the funds and each State needs to approve the change.

Sufficient evidence that cheek swabs are the solution (including an independent review by the INCA Consulting Group) have been provided to the government. The government insist they want to run further reviews (the last review took over 4 years to complete). **We cannot keep running review upon review while Australians are dying waiting for their stem cell match.**