

**NICOLA ROXON
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING**

**SENATOR JAN MCLUCAS
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING**

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NATIONAL BLOOD DONOR WEEK

In National Blood Donor Week, Australians should recognise those who donate blood and acknowledge the professionals who have helped Australia build one of the safest blood supply systems in the world.

The Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister, Senator Jan McLucas, took the opportunity to remind Australians of the importance of donating blood.

“One in three Australians will need blood or blood products in their lifetime, but only 3.5 per cent of the eligible population donate blood regularly,” Ms Roxon said.

“To the more than 500,000 Australians who donated blood in the last year, this is an opportunity for us to say thank you.”

The theme for National Blood Donor Week is ‘every day someone thanks you’, reflecting the life-saving role that blood donors play.

Ms Roxon has been a blood donor for 20 years.

The Australian Red Cross Blood Service will release postcards and other material with stories of survival thanks to blood donors, like John who at 21 nearly lost his life as a rural firefighter. John thanks blood donors, following five months in hospital where he received life-saving blood and blood products.

“About 20,000 blood donations are required each week, to ensure that there is enough blood for people who need it,” Ms Roxon said. “Fresh blood only lasts in storage for up to 42 days and some important blood components only last five days.”

Senator McLucas, whose portfolio responsibilities include blood and organ donation, said next year is the 80th anniversary of blood transfusion and collection services in Australia.

“The Australian Government has declared 2009 to be the Year of the Blood Donor and is providing \$2 million to support a range of exciting activities,” Senator McLucas said.

“Support for next year’s event will give the Australian Red Cross Blood Service even more assistance to help attract younger donors and donors from culturally diverse backgrounds, and to retain existing blood donors.”

Australia will also have the privilege of hosting World Blood Donor Day in 2009. World Blood Donor Day is a World Health Organization event, hosted by a different country each year to raise awareness of the importance of blood donation.

“Australia is leading the way in how we manage and run our blood supply within the Asia-Pacific Region and hosting World Blood Donor Day will provide the opportunity to showcase this,” Senator McLucas said.

Ms Roxon and Senator McLucas called on Australian donors to give blood regularly – and for non-donors to consider donating.

“The whole process takes less than an hour, including the completion of a questionnaire and a health check, the donation, and refreshments,” Ms Roxon said.

“And donors of whole blood can donate every 12 weeks.

“At the start of National Blood Donor Week, consider that each blood donation can save the lives of up to three people – accident victims, people with burns or cancer, or a mother or newborn baby.”

For further information about giving blood, visit www.donateblood.com.au or call 13 14 15.

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