FOREVER GRATEFUL

The Conversation Thesis

A more human approach
to a life-saving decision



ORGAN DONATION
IS A FAMILY DECISION.
IT STARTS WITH A CONVERSATION.

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ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

It is an observational thesis.

It sits at the beginning of Forever Grateful's thinking: an exploration of the experiences, observations, questions, and conversations that gradually shaped an idea into a methodology.

It began with lived experience, but was shaped by years spent listening in hospitals, schools, workplaces, and communities, and by a question that became increasingly difficult to ignore: what helps families talk about organ donation before the conversation is ever needed?

What follows is an exploration of what emerged.

The pages have been allowed to develop much as the thinking did. Ideas appear, connect, change shape, and sometimes give way to better ones. Notes sit beside observations. Evidence meets lived experience. Questions become principles, and principles gradually become a method.

That progression is deliberate.

Rather than presenting a finished model and working backwards to explain it, I want to invite you into the process by which the model took shape. *It is intended to be read as an unfolding line of thought, with some pages asking for attention, others for reflection, and others simply creating space for an idea to land.*

This is a living document. It will continue to evolve with the work. As we listen, learn, and test what we think we know, ideas will deepen, change, and sometimes lead somewhere unexpected. This thesis will grow as Forever Grateful does.

This is the thinking that comes before structure, governance, operations, and organisational planning. Those elements are documented separately in Forever Grateful's Business Plan.

The purpose of these pages is to create a clearer understanding of why this work exists, what we have observed, what we are learning, and the thinking that is shaping what comes next.

It is for the people we hope might help us build it: partners, funders, researchers, clinicians, educators, community leaders, collaborators, and anyone interested in making conversations about organ donation easier to begin.

Most of all, it is an invitation to follow the thinking before deciding what you think of where it led.

To download this document, visit www.forevergrateful.com.au/thesis

The Gift



In February 2019, I received *a heart transplant.*

There is a strange simplicity in writing those words now. They describe a medical event, a date in a calendar, and a moment that divided my life into everything that came before and everything that followed.

For another family, that same day meant something entirely different. Somewhere, people I will never meet were facing the death of someone they loved. In the middle of everything that comes with that loss, organ donation became possible. A decision was made, and because it was, a heart reached me.

I do not know their name.

I only know *their gift.*

I do not know my donor's name. I do not know their family. I do not know whether they had spoken about organ donation around a dinner table, during a drive home, over a cup of coffee, or in one of those conversations that seems ordinary until years later, when suddenly it matters enormously.

I only know what their decision made possible.

But this is not a story about what happened to me. It is an exploration of what became visible *because* it happened.

Somewhere between the possibility of donation and the decision a family may one day be asked to make, there is a conversation. And I believe there is an opportunity to make that conversation easier to begin.



Jayden Cummins

Founder, Forever Grateful Ltd

& a very grateful father, partner, friend, son, brother x

THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY GIFTS OFTEN COME ON DAYS THAT ARE THE HARDEST TO IMAGINE.

I woke up. I went home. I watched my son grow older. I met the love of my life.



Birthdays came around again. Christmases. Ordinary Tuesdays.



Life continued.

Living with a donor heart changes the way you understand time.

The years since my transplant have carried an awareness that is difficult to put into words. Gratitude is part of it, although even that word can feel too small. There is also responsibility.

Someone I will never know gave me the opportunity to keep living, and a family I will never meet allowed that opportunity to become real.



I returned to the people I love, met people I would never otherwise have known, and stood in rooms I was never expected to reach.



As the years passed, I found myself thinking increasingly about them. I wondered what they knew when they were asked, what their person had told them, and whether something said years earlier had helped them understand what the person they loved would want.



The ordinary moments. The ones we never know we'll miss.

And I began to wonder how a family reaches one of the most difficult moments imaginable already knowing the answer to that question.

For some families, that understanding comes from conversations. For others, it comes from something said long ago that suddenly makes sense. Either way, it can make an impossible moment just that little bit less impossible.

That thought stayed with me. Eventually, it changed the direction of my life.



Someone gave me the opportunity to keep living.

I wanted to understand how.

The Responsibility That Followed



In hospitals.



In schools and workplaces.



In institutions.

For a long time, I did not know what to do with the gratitude. How do you respond to something that large?

My transplant had given me more life, but it had also connected my life permanently to another person, another family, and a decision made on an unimaginably difficult day. Over time, I started spending more time around the world that had saved me.

I returned to hospitals. I spoke with transplant recipients and their families. I met donor families and listened to clinicians who had spent their careers caring for people on both sides of donation. I began speaking in schools, workplaces, community settings, and rooms full of people who had never given organ donation much thought at all.

Every conversation added something. I heard extraordinary stories of lives saved and lives rebuilt. I heard about birthdays that should never have happened, children who got their parents back, and families who had found meaning in knowing that something of the person they loved had continued in the lives of others.

I also began to understand the other side of the story.

Donation is ultimately carried by families. When the possibility arises, they may be experiencing shock, grief, exhaustion, and disbelief. Into that moment comes a question about the wishes of someone they love.

And I kept thinking about my own donor family. What had made their decision possible? Had they known what their person wanted? Had someone once said something in passing that suddenly became important? Had they talked about donation properly, or had they been left trying to work it out for themselves?

The more people I spoke with, the more interested I became in what happens before that moment. **Long before the hospital. Long before anybody is waiting for an answer.**

In kitchens, cars, living rooms, schools, workplaces, and ordinary conversations between people who love one another, we gradually learn what matters to each other. Those conversations can seem insignificant when they happen. Years later, they may be anything but.

That realisation gave my gratitude somewhere to go.

I wanted to understand how we could make those conversations easier to begin, and how more families might reach an impossible moment already carrying one important thing with them: an understanding of the person they love.

That became the beginning of Forever Grateful.



Understanding begins long before a family is ever asked.

"



THE CONVERSATION

What changed when we stopped telling and started asking.



The Missing Conversation

Imagine being asked to speak for someone you love when you desperately want to get the answer right.

Australia has built an extraordinary organ donation and transplantation system. Behind every successful transplant sits years of medical expertise, national coordination, specialist training, research, technology, and the skill of clinical teams who make the seemingly impossible possible.

And yet, after all of that work, donation can still come down to something deeply personal.

A family will be asked whether they know and wish to honour the wishes of someone they love. Without family consent, donation does not proceed.

Did we ever talk about this?

Did they ever tell me what they wanted?

Was that comment they made years ago serious?

What would they want me to do?

There is no opportunity to go back and ask.

For some families, the answer is clear. They have spoken about it, perhaps once, perhaps many times. They know how that person felt about donation, and they carry that understanding with them when it matters.

For others, the question arrives without that history. They may know that their loved one supported organ donation. They may discover that they had registered. They may have a general sense of what kind of person they were. But they may never have actually talked about it.



It can begin tonight.

At a dinner table, in the car, over coffee, or during a conversation that wanders somewhere unexpected. A question gets asked. Someone shares what they think. Somebody else disagrees. Another person admits they have never really thought about it before.

Currently Only Around

HALF

of Australian families approached about organ donation provide consent each year.

The numbers are important.
The people inside them are more important.

Behind the remaining decisions are hundreds of families trying to understand what someone they love would have wanted while confronting circumstances they could never have anticipated.

This is the missing conversation. It sits in the space between what I believe and what the people closest to me know about what I believe.

That space can exist even when somebody supports organ donation. It can exist even when they have registered their decision. Awareness, intention, and family understanding do not always arrive together.

And this is where the opportunity becomes surprisingly hopeful, because the moment to strengthen that understanding does not begin in an intensive care unit.



The most important conversation about organ donation should happen years before donation is ever possible.

Nothing needs to be resolved.

But now the conversation exists. And if life ever takes that family somewhere they never expected to go, they may know one another a little better because of it.

The Scale of the Opportunity

For most people waiting for an organ transplant, there is a phone call they desperately hope will come.

It might arrive in the middle of the night, over dinner, or in the middle of an otherwise ordinary day. Somewhere a donor organ has become available, the complicated process of matching has taken place, and suddenly there is a possibility that may not have existed a few hours earlier.

For many people on the waiting list, that possibility can mean the difference between life and death.



Each year, Australians receive those life saving calls, while others remain on the waiting list hoping that their own call will come.

For a long time, I thought about the challenge mainly in terms of finding more donors and encouraging more Australians to register. Both are enormously important, but the more I learned about the donation process, the more I began to understand how much opportunity also sits in the decisions families are asked to make.

Australia has built an extraordinary organ donation and transplantation system. It brings together specialist clinicians, hospitals, retrieval teams, national coordination, research, technology, and decades of medical knowledge.

When donation becomes possible, that entire system can mobilise with remarkable speed to give somebody else the chance to live.

For that to happen, the family must agree to donation.

53% of Australian families approached about organ donation provided consent in 2025.

Even if that increased to just 60 per cent, **around 200 additional life saving organ transplants** could have occurred in that year alone.

When I first understood what that meant, it changed the scale of the opportunity for me. A relatively modest improvement in family consent could create the possibility of hundreds more transplants, with every one of those transplants carrying consequences for a person waiting and for all the people who are waiting alongside them.

There are many reasons why a family may or may not consent to organ donation, and no statistic can capture what is happening for people facing the death of someone they love. **But knowledge of a person's wishes can matter enormously.**







Right now, the families who may one day face these decisions are simply getting on with their lives.

They are eating dinner together, driving children to sport, going to work, attending school, celebrating birthdays, complaining about traffic, making plans for the weekend, and having thousands of ordinary conversations about the things that matter to them. Most will never be asked about organ donation. Some will. Nobody can know which families those will be.

What we can do is help make conversations about organ donation easier and more normal while there is time to have them.

It reaches from an ordinary conversation in one family's home to another family somewhere else hoping that the phone will ring.

Why the Gap Persists

If family conversation can make such a difference, an obvious question follows: why are so many families still reaching that moment without having had one?

Australia has spent decades building the systems that make donation and transplantation possible. Clinical practice has advanced. National coordination has strengthened. Awareness campaigns have reached millions. Registering a decision has become simple and accessible.

All of that work matters enormously.

But family conversations behave differently.

They happen privately, in homes, cars, workplaces, schools and communities. They rarely happen because somebody has carefully scheduled a discussion about organ donation for an ordinary night.

More often, something prompts them.

A story on television.



Something that happened to a friend.



A question from a child.





A conversation about death, health, values, or what each of us would want if something unexpected happened.



Someone can see a campaign and support organ donation. They can understand why it matters and register their decision, and still never really talk about it at home.

Their family may know that they are registered without understanding why. They may vaguely remember that the subject came up once. They may simply assume they know what each other thinks.

Until one day an assumption is no longer enough.

This is the gap that fascinated me. There is a journey between knowing about organ donation and the people closest to you genuinely understanding your wishes. The existing system does an extraordinary job of informing Australians and providing a pathway to formally record a decision. The family conversation sits somewhere else. It belongs to families themselves.

That also makes it unusually difficult to measure. We can count registrations, campaign reach, website visits, event attendance, clinical activity, donation outcomes, and transplants.

A meaningful conversation around someone's kitchen table leaves no convenient data point behind.

Perhaps it should not.

These conversations are personal. They may involve uncertainty, disagreement, curiosity, humour, fear, love, culture, faith, and deeply held values. Their purpose is not to produce the answer somebody else wants. Their value comes from helping people understand one another.

That distinction became incredibly important as Forever Grateful began to take shape.

If we wanted more families to have these conversations, simply giving them more information was unlikely to be enough.

We needed to think about what actually makes people want to talk.

And that led us somewhere very different.

Awareness can introduce the idea. → **The conversation is where a family begins to make it their own.**

WHAT CHANGED EVERYTHING?

ASK,

We learned that curiosity opens doors.

The more I thought about family conversations, *the more I realised that we had been starting in the wrong place.*

We had been leading with information, assuming that if people understood the facts, they would be ready to talk.

Information matters, but it does not begin a conversation. Facts do not create the safety that families need.

We tried something different. **We stopped talking at people and started inviting them in.**



In schools. In workplaces. In community groups.



We asked questions. We listened deeply.



We created space for stories, not speeches.



We trusted that people already carry the wisdom we were seeking.

The response was completely different.

People leaned in. They opened up. They began to share.



DO NOT TELL.

Information alone rarely does.

This matters because family conversations are deeply personal.

They touch culture, faith, life experience, death, trust, grief and personal values.

These conversations need care. They need patience. They cannot be rushed. They cannot be forced.
They can only be invited.

When we ask instead of tell,
people feel respected.
They feel seen.
They feel safe enough to explore what matters to them.

Once people feel safe, they begin to share. And when they share, understanding grows.



THE OBJECTIVE WAS DELIBERATELY SIMPLE.

Get people talking.

Once we understood that,
an entirely different kind of program started to emerge.

The starting point was clear:

give people something worth talking about.

Creating the Conditions

Stories became important because stories give people somewhere to enter. My transplant story might begin the conversation, but very quickly it becomes someone else's story. A relative who received a transplant. A friend who died waiting. Someone who had donated tissue. A family experience in intensive care.

Sometimes it becomes a completely different conversation about what people value, how they make difficult decisions, or whether their own family actually knows what they want.

Once the objective became conversation, the next question was practical: what actually helps one begin?

It sounds simple until you try it. Organ donation carries a lot with it. Death, grief, family, medicine, generosity, uncertainty, culture, faith, and personal choice can all enter the conversation very quickly. Walk up to a family and announce that it is time to discuss their wishes about organ donation, and you can understand why somebody might prefer to talk about almost anything else.

Permission to be unsure.

People needed permission to be unsure.

No right answer waiting at the end.

They needed to know there was no right answer waiting for them at the end.

Most of all, the conversation needed to feel human.



So we started thinking less about the message and more about the conditions around the conversation.

Some conversations will last five minutes. Others might continue over dinner. A question might be abandoned and revisited months later. That is perfectly fine because meaningful family understanding rarely arrives through one perfectly constructed discussion. It develops over time.

The pack does not attempt to recreate a classroom at the kitchen table. It gives people a reason to sit together, pick up a card, ask a question, tell a story, disagree, laugh, wonder, and perhaps discover something about each other that they did not know before.

Questions became equally important. Instead of asking people to absorb a list of facts, we could ask:

What are your wishes?

Does your family know them?

Why does it matter to you?

What questions do you still have?



We also learned that a little unpredictability helps. A question selected by chance can feel surprisingly liberating because nobody around the table chose where the conversation went.

Questions interesting enough to explore.

They needed questions that felt interesting enough to explore.

Suddenly, organ donation becomes something people can explore together rather than something being presented to them.



This also meant relinquishing something organisations often find difficult to relinquish: CONTROL. Forever Grateful does not need to know what answer a family reaches. We do not need everybody to agree. We do not need to sit at their table and measure the conversation while it happens.

The conversation belongs to them.

Our job is to make it easier to begin.

That idea became the foundation for something tangible people could actually take home with them.

What could someone take home that might genuinely lead to a conversation?

We did not want another brochure. There is already excellent information available about organ donation, and if somebody wants to learn more, we should make it easy for them to find it. But the thing we were trying to create had a different job.

It needed to survive the journey home.

It needed to be interesting enough to come out of a bag, land on a kitchen table, and make somebody else ask, "What's that?"



Nothing dictates the order.

A family might roll the dice first.

Someone might pick up a card because the question catches their eye.

A child might notice something in the pack and ask what it means.

One person may want to know the facts, while another immediately begins telling a story.



Cards with questions, stories, prompts, and things people might not know.



A wooden dice that introduces chance into where the conversation begins.



Tactile pieces people can pick up and pass around.





Simple pathways to further information when curiosity takes them there.

The pack simply gives *all* of those things somewhere to happen.

That physicality turned out to matter more than I expected.

We live surrounded by information competing for our attention. Links disappear into message threads. Posts are scrolled past. Websites are opened and forgotten.

A small object sitting on a table behaves differently.

It can remain there.



Someone else can discover it.

A conversation that did not happen on Tuesday can still happen on Sunday.



At the end of a Forever Grateful experience, people are invited to take one if they want to continue the conversation.

That tiny act of choice matters.

Someone has heard the story, participated in the discussion, and decided for themselves that this is something worth carrying into their own life.

They pick up a pack and take responsibility for whatever happens next.



The talk may have started with my story, but now the story has moved into another family.



We do not know exactly what happens when the pack reaches their home, and we should not pretend that we do.

What we can do is design thoughtful opportunities for the conversation to continue, provide pathways people can follow when they want more, and learn from the signals they choose to give us along the way.

That has allowed the Conversation Starter Pack to become much more than collateral handed out after a presentation.

It is the bridge between a shared experience in a room and a private conversation at home.

And increasingly, it is becoming one of the most important pieces of the Forever Grateful model.

The presentation starts the conversation.

The pack gives it *somewhere to go.*



From a Talk to a Method



SCHOOL

Young people want to be respected and invited in.



WORKPLACE

Colleagues need relevance, not more information.

For a long time, Forever Grateful developed in the most useful way possible: by being tested in real rooms with real people.

Every audience taught us something. Students showed up differently from workers. Hospitals carried a different weight. Community groups brought their own wisdom.

Over time, patterns began to emerge. They were not abstract ideas. They were human responses we saw again and again.

Questions created ownership. Stories created relevance. And even the order of the experience mattered.

We learned that what happens in the room shapes what happens after we leave.



HOSPITAL

Real stories build trust where facts sometimes cannot.



MEDIA

Taking the conversation to a wider audience.

Every audience taught us something.

Behind the natural experience, we began to recognise the behavioural intention guiding the flow.

NOTICE

Something catches their attention.



CARE

They feel something. It matters.



SEE YOURSELF

They reflect. They connect. They recognise themselves in the story.



ACT

They see that the choice is theirs. They choose what happens next.





It sounds quite structured when written down.

In the room, it should never feel that way.

It should feel like a conversation that happens to go somewhere.

What needs to happen in the room for the story to continue after we leave?

That question has shaped everything.

It is the reason the presentation exists.

It is the reason the pack exists.

It is the reason this model keeps evolving.



Agency



There is a moment in the Forever Grateful presentation that has become particularly important to me.

I talk about the heart beating inside my chest.

It belonged to somebody else for an entire lifetime before it became part of mine. I know almost nothing about that person, and perhaps I never will. But there is something about them I know with absolute certainty.

Nothing about who they were on the OUTSIDE mattered.

I could have received a heart from almost anyone. As long as our tissue, blood, and size matched, nothing else mattered. I do not know their race or religion. I do not know their politics, how much money they had, where they came from, who they loved, or what they believed. None of those things determined whether their heart could save my life.

“ Organ donation is one of the purest illustrations that underneath all our skin, we are all the same. ”

That thought often changes the feeling in the room. Perhaps it is because we live at a time when so much attention is given to the things that distinguish us from one another.



Identity matters. Culture matters. Belief matters. Our individual experiences matter. They help make us who we are.

Yet here is a human heart quietly reminding us that we also belong to each other.

Your Voice



That becomes particularly powerful when I am speaking with young people.

I tell students that I think they are part of an incredibly exciting generation. They have grown up with a voice that previous generations were not always encouraged to use. They are willing to question things. They care deeply about identity, equality, fairness, belonging, and the kind of world they are going to inherit.

I want them to understand that their voice already has value. They do not need to wait until they are older to contribute to important conversations. They do not need to wait for a parent, teacher, government, or organisation to begin one for them.



Sometimes they may be the person best placed to begin it.



A parent might feel uncomfortable raising organ donation around the dinner table. A teenager can come home, put a small green pack on the table, roll a dice, and say, "We talked about this today. What do you guys think?"

Suddenly, the difficult conversation has a doorway.

This idea of agency extends well beyond schools. Every person who experiences Forever Grateful has a circle of people around them: families, partners, friends, colleagues, teammates, neighbours, and communities. When one person feels confident enough to begin a conversation, the reach of the work no longer ends with the audience in front of us.

It travels.



That is the change we want to empower. We cannot know which conversation will one day matter. We cannot know which family will unexpectedly find itself being asked to make a decision. But every one of us can make sure the people we love know us a little better.

And we do not have to wait for somebody else to start.

You can be the one who starts it.



A MODEL THAT CAN TRAVEL

Taking the conversation beyond one room and one voice.



ONE MODEL, MANY ROOMS

Once we understood what we were actually trying to create, another possibility became clear.

The conversation did not belong to any particular room.

It could begin in a school classroom with a group of teenagers who had never thought seriously about organ donation. It could happen over morning tea in a workplace, at a community gathering, beside a hospital bed, at a sporting club, or around a table in a regional town.

The audiences would be different. The language would need to change. The questions people brought with them would be different too.

But the human need underneath remained remarkably consistent.

A model that can travel.



People needed a reason to care, enough understanding to participate, permission to explore what they thought, and a practical way to carry the conversation into their own lives.

That gave Forever Grateful something we had not necessarily set out to build at the beginning: a model that could travel.

Schools became an obvious place to start. Young people are forming their own values while still being deeply connected to family life. They are curious, willing to challenge assumptions, and, as we have already discovered, often remarkably capable of beginning conversations adults have avoided.

The school program gives them a lived experience story, invites them into the issue, and then gives them the confidence and tools to take the conversation home.

Workplaces offer a different opportunity. Adults spend an enormous part of their lives at work. A presentation among colleagues can create a shared moment that follows people into lunchrooms, car trips home, and conversations with partners and children that evening. A workplace can also become a community of its own, where one person's story prompts another.

Stories travel. People connect. Conversations find their way home.



Hospitals bring us closer to the world that gave Forever Grateful its beginning. They are places where lived experience can support patients and families, connect with clinicians, and remind us that behind every medical pathway are people trying to make sense of extraordinary circumstances.





Community settings open the door wider again. Sporting clubs, cultural organisations, local councils, regional communities, events, and community groups each have their own relationships, histories, and ways of talking. The Forever Grateful model can meet people within those environments rather than expecting everybody to come to us.





And **digital delivery** allows the conversation to travel further still. A regional school should not miss out because a speaker cannot physically reach it. A workplace with teams across Australia should be able to participate together. A family that encounters Forever Grateful online should still be able to find a question worth asking at home.



The ambition is not to make every experience identical. It is to protect what makes the experience work while allowing it to belong to the people in front of us.

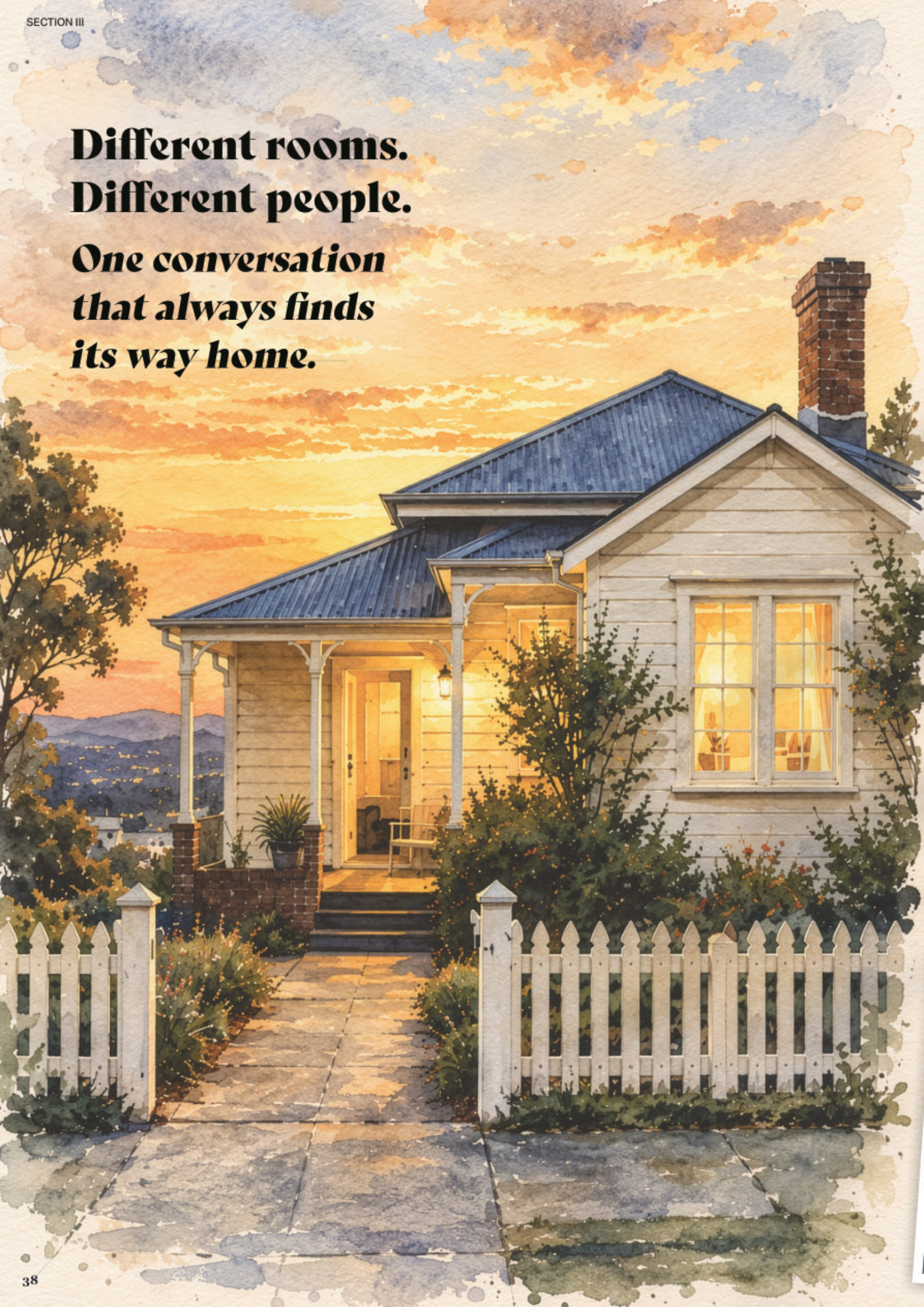
The story can change. The speaker can change. The examples, cultural context, delivery format, and questions can evolve. Over time, **other lived experience voices can bring** perspectives very different from mine.

What remains constant is the journey toward conversation.



That is how something that began with one transplant story can become much larger than the person telling it.

And that is where Forever Grateful begins to become truly scalable.


Different rooms.
Different people.
One conversation
that always finds
its way home.

FROM AN IDEA INTO THE WORLD

Forever Grateful did not begin with a finished model. It began with a question, a transplant story, and a growing conviction that family conversations deserved more attention.



Then we started trying things.

We spoke in schools and workplaces. We spent time with clinicians, transplant recipients, donor families, educators, community leaders, and people who had no connection to organ donation at all. We watched what happened when different questions were asked, listened when something resonated, and paid attention when it did not. Slowly, the idea became something people could experience. The presentation developed, the Conversation Starter Packs developed, the questions became better, and the methodology became clearer.

And people began opening doors.













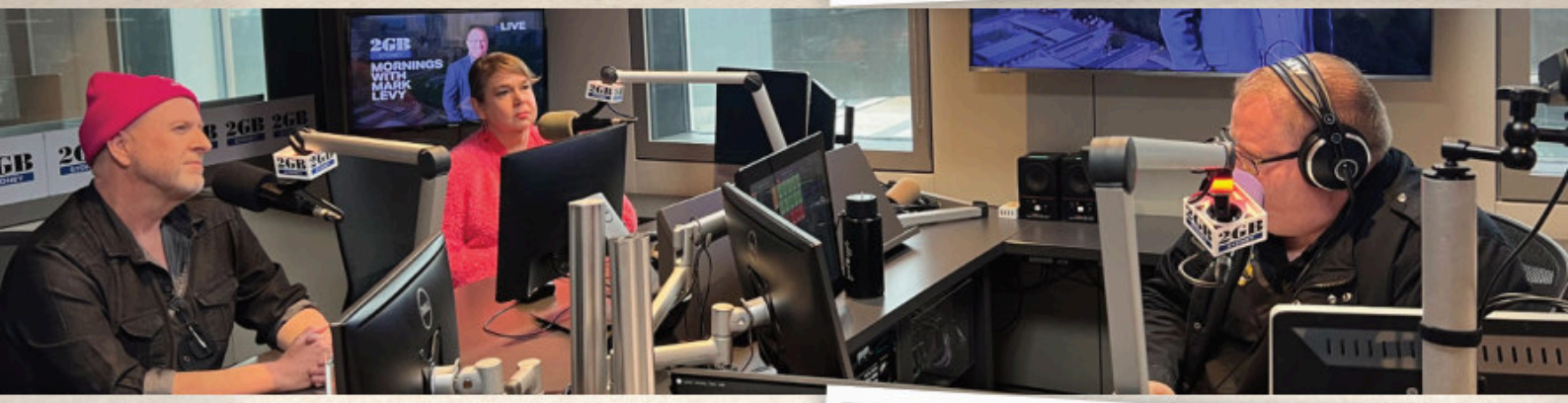
That matters because Forever Grateful is still young, but the work is no longer theoretical.



It has entered schools, workplaces, community events, and conversations. It has been shared with clinicians, researchers, health organisations, transplant communities, and people working inside the donation system. Most importantly, people have begun taking the conversation home.



Every one of those experiences has helped us understand what Forever Grateful could become. Some have led to partnerships. Others have led to introductions, invitations, funding opportunities, research conversations, or simply somebody saying, "You need to talk to this person." That is often how meaningful things grow in the beginning. One conversation opens another, and the same principle behind the program has started shaping the organisation itself.



From the beginning, we have also understood that this work cannot be developed in isolation. Organ donation and transplantation sit within an extraordinary network of people and organisations, and Forever Grateful actively collaborates across that network. We engage with federal and state agencies, health departments, education systems, hospitals, clinicians, research institutes, and people who understand the medical and behavioural questions surrounding donation.



Just as importantly, we listen to donor families, transplant recipients, educators, students, community leaders, and the families who ultimately carry these conversations into their own homes.

Each brings a different perspective.

Government understands systems, policy, public health, and the realities of delivering at scale.

Clinicians understand what happens when donation becomes possible.

Researchers help us ask better questions and build evidence.

Educators understand how young people learn and engage.

Donor families understand the decision in a way nobody else possibly can.

Recipients live every day with what that decision made possible.





Forever Grateful can sit among all of them.



We do not need to own the organ donation conversation.
We just want to help more Australians have it.

THE MOMENT THAT MATTERS

As Forever Grateful has developed, donor families have become some of our most important teachers. They understand something about organ donation that very few people ever will. They know what it is like to be asked.

Behind every donation is a family experiencing an extraordinary moment of loss.

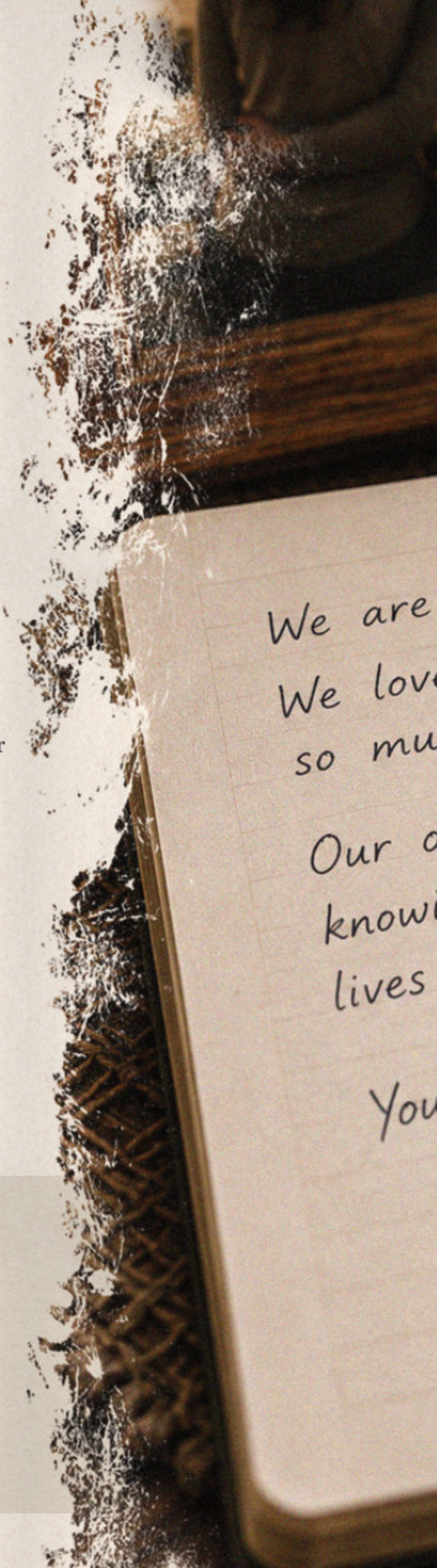
Whatever preparation has happened beforehand, nothing makes that moment ordinary. Grief does not disappear because somebody has registered as a donor, and a previous conversation cannot remove the enormity of what a family is experiencing. But it can give them something incredibly important: **clarity.**

I have spoken with donor families who knew exactly what their loved one wanted because they had already talked about it.

Sometimes the conversation had been serious. Sometimes it had happened almost casually. Perhaps organ donation came up in the news, somebody mentioned being registered, or the family found themselves talking about what they would want after they died.

At the time, they could never have imagined how important that conversation might become.

Then the unimaginable happened, and when the family was asked, they knew.



A phrase I have heard from many donor families stays with me:

“ It took the guesswork out. ”


so heartbroken.
e and miss you
ch every day.
nly comfort is
ng that a part of you
on in someone else.
are our hero.
xxx

There is something incredibly powerful in that.

A family still has to confront the loss of someone they love, but they are not being asked to invent that person's wishes for them. They have heard their voice. They understand what mattered to them. They can draw upon a conversation that happened when there was time to ask questions, think, and talk, and when nobody was waiting for an immediate answer.

Registration can contribute enormously to that clarity. It records an individual's decision and provides another important indication of what they wanted. We encourage people who choose donation to register because making that decision known matters.

But registration and family understanding are not quite the same thing. A name on a register can tell a family what someone decided. A conversation can help them understand why.

Neither can guarantee what a family will ultimately decide when they are asked for consent. Human beings, grief, and families are more complicated than that.

What they can do is reduce uncertainty.

Registration and conversation work best together. They give families clarity when it matters most.

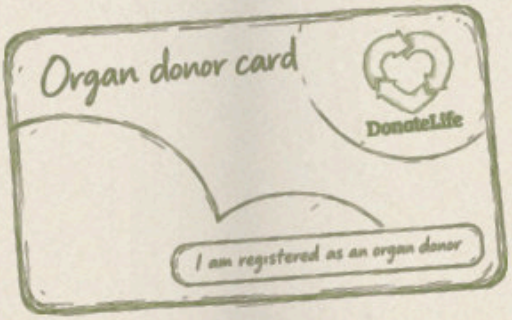


That is why Forever Grateful sees registration and conversation as parts of the same journey. The strongest position we can help create is one where somebody has considered their wishes, recorded their decision, and made sure the people closest to them understand it.

A complete journey



Considered their wishes



Recorded their decision



Made sure the people closest to them understand it

There is another thing donor families have taught me too.

When they speak about the person they lost and the donation that followed, one sentiment appears again and again: pride. Pride in the person they loved, pride in the lives they helped save, and pride in knowing that, at the end of one life, something extraordinary was given to others.

Some families have described wanting to honour that decision because it represented who their loved one was.

In the middle of devastating loss, donation became part of their story and part of the legacy that person left behind. That is worth remembering when we talk about family consent because there is another way to think about that moment.

A family can arrive already knowing. They can hear the question and recognise the answer.

Instead of having to guess what someone they love might have wanted, they can be given the opportunity to honour something that person had already shared with them.



Perhaps that is the greatest reason to have the conversation.

Not for Forever Grateful, a campaign, a target, or a statistic, but for the people who may one day have to speak for us when we can no longer speak for ourselves.

IV



BUILT TO LEARN

From instinct and experience to evidence.



KNOWING WHETHER IT WORKED

If the real outcome we care about happens around a family dinner table, we have to be careful about what we call success.

It would be easy to count the number of people who sit in a Forever Grateful audience and call that impact. Ten schools, two thousand students, twenty workplace presentations, fifty thousand online views. Those numbers are useful because they tell us how far the work has travelled, but reach is only the beginning.

The question we really want to answer is much harder:

Did somebody care enough to continue the conversation?





Registration gives us something enormously valuable. It records an individual decision, gives a family another piece of information when they are asked about the wishes of someone they love, and gives the wider system something it understandably needs: a clear, measurable action.



Conversations are harder. They happen privately, leave no official record, and rarely produce a neat data point that can be placed in a report or tracked against a target. We understand why that matters. Governments, agencies, funders, and policy makers need evidence. They need to know whether investment is producing results.



So part of the challenge Forever Grateful has embraced is finding responsible ways to measure the signals around conversation without pretending we can measure the private conversation itself.



The Conversation Starter Pack gives us one small but meaningful signal. We do not automatically hand one to everybody who attends a session. People are invited to take one if they want it. When somebody walks over, picks up a pack, puts it in their bag, and carries it home, they have made a voluntary choice to continue engaging with the idea.



We cannot claim that proves a family conversation happened. But it tells us something more useful than attendance alone: they intended to do something next.

For the first time, the conversation leaves a trail.

A SINGLE MOMENT CAN TRAVEL A LONG WAY



Intent

Did they choose to take the conversation home?

The Conversation Starter Pack is offered, not automatically distributed. Choosing to take one gives us our first signal. It does not prove that a conversation happened. It tells us somebody intended to continue engaging after the presentation ended.

Engagement

Did they explore what they took home?

Different cards and resources provide their own pathways to further information. Tagged QR codes allow us to see which subjects generate curiosity, what people choose to explore, and which resources draw them further into the conversation.

For the first time, we can begin to see engagement occurring beyond the room where the presentation took place.

Action

Did they choose to formally record their decision?

A separate pathway leads to the Australian Organ Donor Register. Where somebody chooses to follow it, we have another clear signal: the journey has moved from hearing, to exploring, to taking action towards formally recording their decision.

Intent. Engagement. Action.

These stages do not tell us what happened around a family's dinner table. They are not intended to.

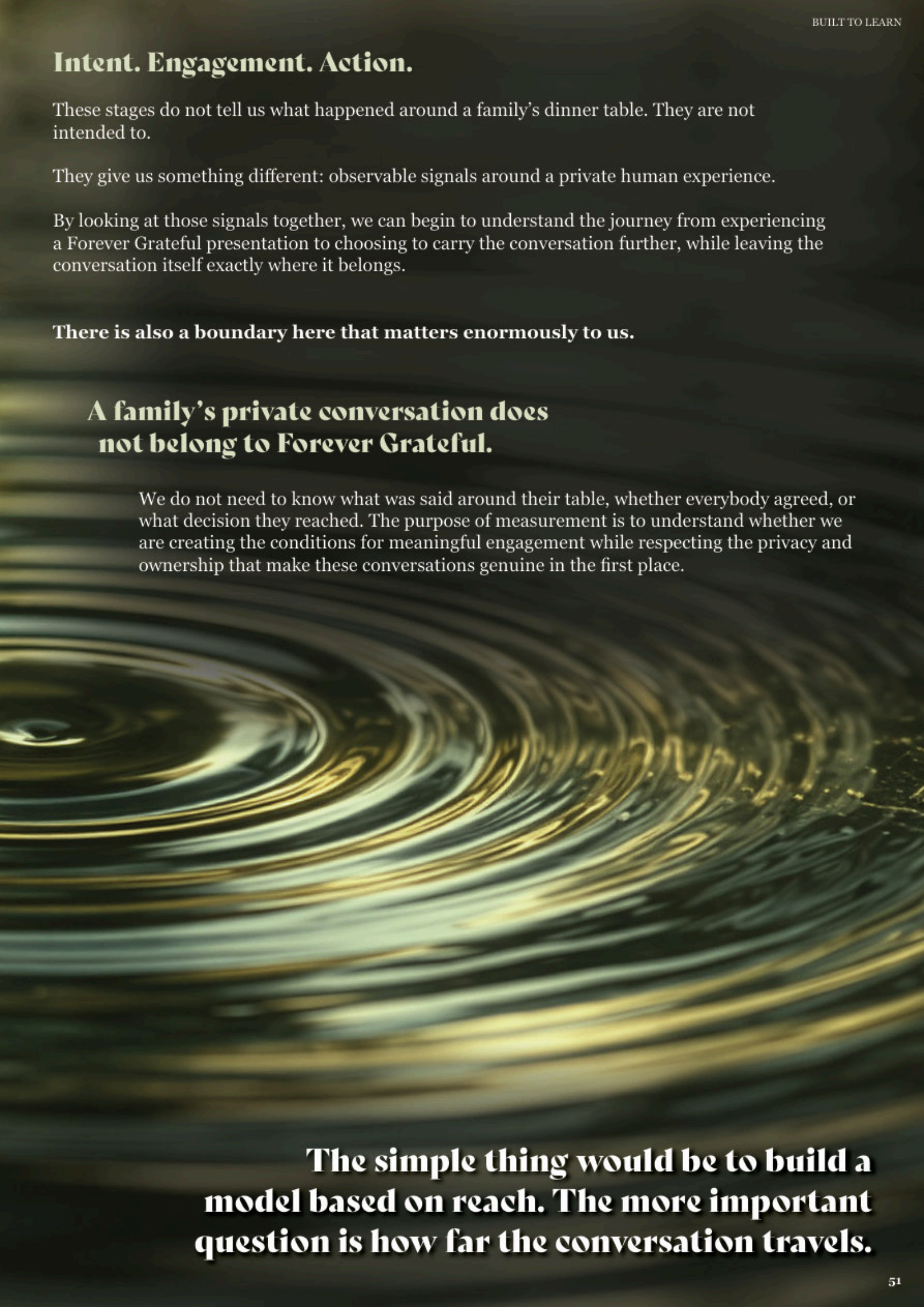
They give us something different: observable signals around a private human experience.

By looking at those signals together, we can begin to understand the journey from experiencing a Forever Grateful presentation to choosing to carry the conversation further, while leaving the conversation itself exactly where it belongs.

There is also a boundary here that matters enormously to us.

A family's private conversation does not belong to Forever Grateful.

We do not need to know what was said around their table, whether everybody agreed, or what decision they reached. The purpose of measurement is to understand whether we are creating the conditions for meaningful engagement while respecting the privacy and ownership that make these conversations genuine in the first place.



The simple thing would be to build a model based on reach. The more important question is how far the conversation travels.

Real Conversations. Lasting Change.

Flexible.
Responsive.
Always learning.

N
W
E
S

Purpose keeps us on course.

A HEALTHIER, MORE COMPASSIONATE AUSTRALIA



...TO AN INSTITUTION THAT LASTS.

...TO A MOVEMENT ACROSS COMMUNITIES...

FROM A PRESENTATION IN A ROOM...



MORE CONVERSATIONS
MORE REGISTRATIONS
MORE LIVES
MORE TOMORROWS

LISTEN
LEARN
ADAPT
GROW
REPEAT

4 SCALE

Expand reach.
Deepen impact.
Keep it human.

3 REFINE

Mensure what matters.
Learn in real time.

2 PARTNER

Build with communities.
Not for them.

FOUNDER STORY

1 PILOT

SCHOOLS
COMMUNITIES
WORKPLACES
HOSPITALS
ONLINE

Lived experience. opens the door.

Different conversations today for a brighter tomorrow.

FOREVER GRATEFUL

Deeper roots. A broader future.

PEOPLE
CONVERSATIONS
COMMUNITIES
CULTURE
SYSTEM CHANGE

BUILT TO LEARN

Students connected more with personal stories than facts.

There is something liberating about accepting that we do not have every answer yet.

Forever Grateful is working with human behaviour, and human behaviour has a habit of refusing to behave exactly as expected. A presentation can be carefully planned and then one question from a student changes the entire room. A prompt we think will generate discussion might barely register, while something almost incidental becomes the thing people remember. A community may interpret an idea differently because of culture, faith, language, family structure, or lived experience.

That is useful information.

A presentation can be carefully planned and then one question from a student changes the entire room.

A prompt we think will generate discussion might barely register, while something almost incidental becomes the thing people remember.

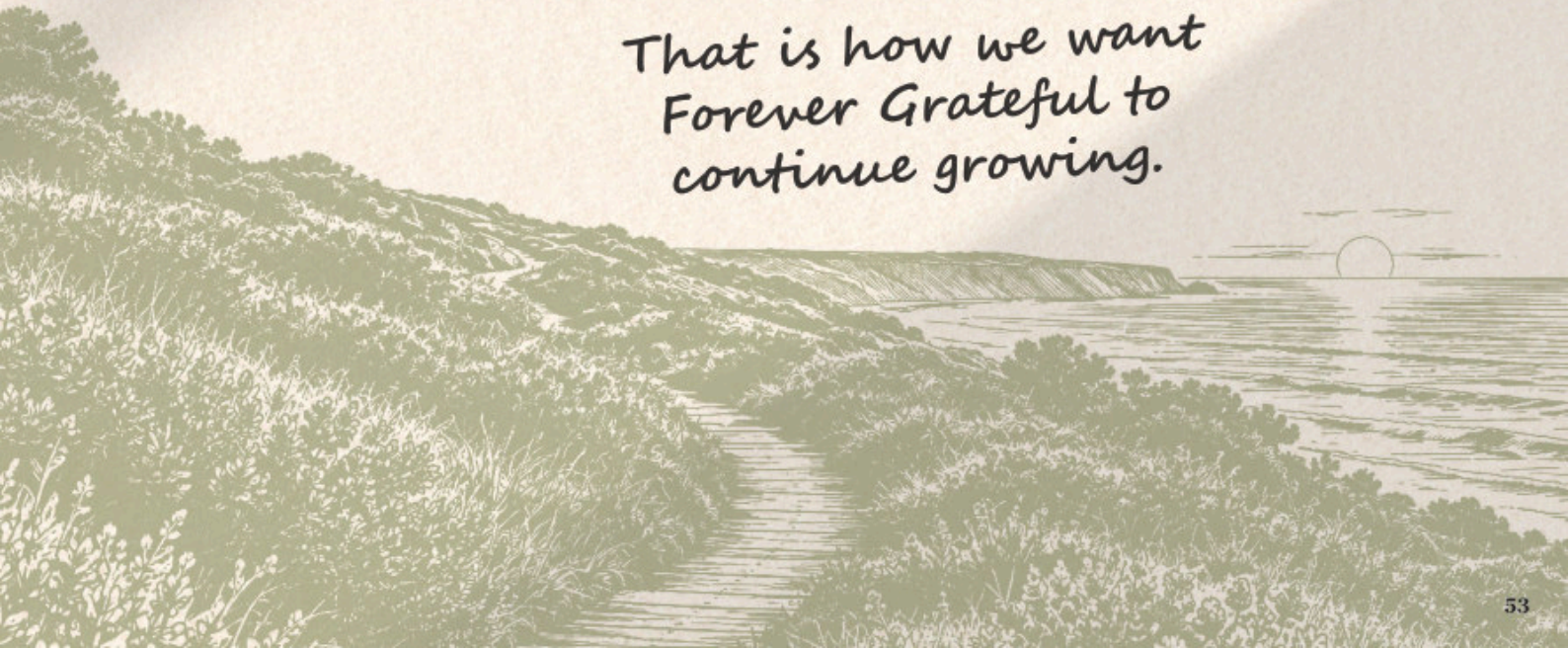
A community may interpret an idea differently because of culture, faith, language, family structure, or lived experience.

The challenge is to build an organisation capable of listening to it.

From the beginning, Forever Grateful has developed through a cycle of trying, observing, listening, changing, and trying again.

The Conversation Starter Packs have evolved through prototypes. Presentation material has changed because of audience reactions. Questions have been rewritten. Ideas that sounded wonderful on paper have sometimes become less interesting once real people encountered them, while others have become far more powerful than we imagined.

That is how we want Forever Grateful to continue growing.



Schools Pilot

In 2026 -2027, a number of New South Wales local government areas have committed funding for school pilots across high schools within their catchment via the ClubGRANTS scheme.. For the first time, we will have the opportunity to deliver the methodology repeatedly across different school communities and learn from what happens.

Until now, much of Forever Grateful has grown through opportunity, experimentation, relationships, and the willingness of people to say yes to an idea they believed was worth exploring. The next stage allows us to become more deliberate. We can see what remains consistent across different rooms, where the model needs to adapt, what people carry with them afterwards, and what the experience teaches us about the conversation itself.

That matters because the challenge now is no longer simply to create something that works in an individual room. It is to take what we have learned in those rooms and build the evidence, partnerships, capability, and reach that allow those conversations to happen in thousands more.

The next stage gives us the opportunity to become much more deliberate about that process. The school pilots give us the opportunity to move from individual experiences into structured learning. Across different schools, communities, students, and teachers, we can begin to see what remains consistent, what changes with context, and which parts of the model matter most.

Forever Grateful has moved beyond asking whether the idea can work.

We are beginning to discover how far it can travel.











In 2027, four NSW local government areas have already committed support to the Forever Grateful Schools Pilot across at least eighteen local high schools.

City of Newcastle
Five local high schools

4 LGA's

18 LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS

HORNSBY RSL CLUB

Hornsby Shire
Five local high schools

- CLUB - PARRAMATTA

City of Parramatta
Five local high schools

INNER WEST

Inner West Council
Three local high schools

What we want to learn

- What students remember
- Which moments change the energy in the room
- Which questions generate discussion
- How many students choose to take a Conversation Starter Pack home, and what happens when they do.
- What teachers observe afterwards.
- What conversations students attempted at home, where they became stuck, and what makes the subject easier to explore.

These questions help us refine the experience, but they also begin building something Forever Grateful will increasingly need as it grows: **EVIDENCE.**

From pilots to progress.

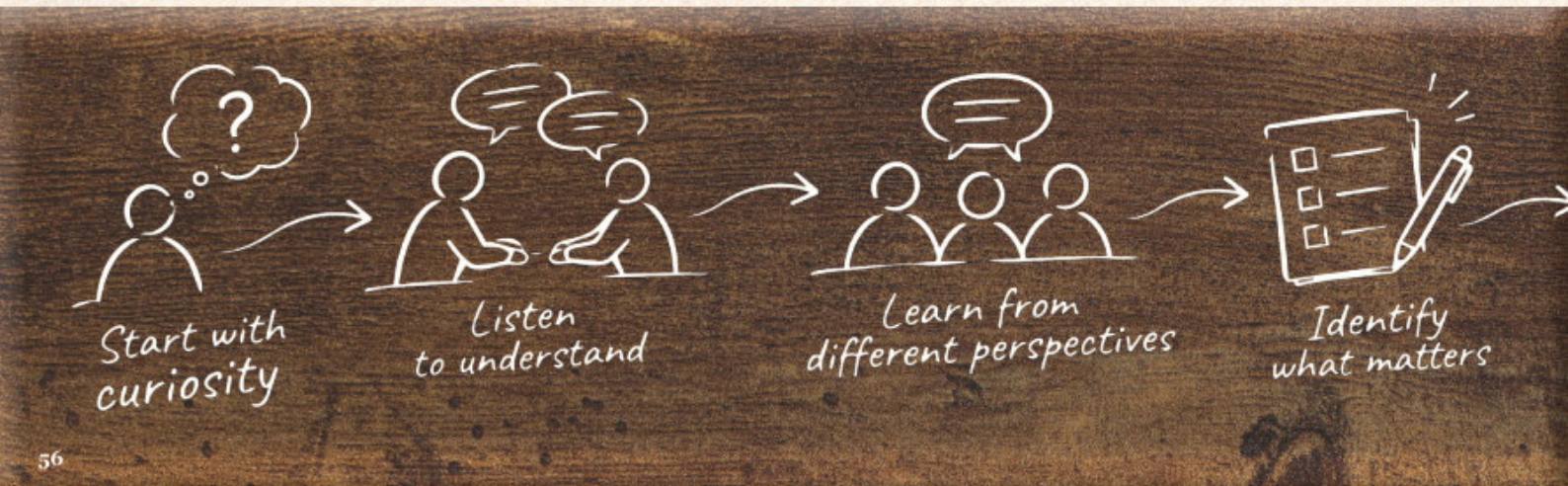
We have a strong human hypothesis. If people understand why family conversation matters, feel personally connected to the issue, and are given the confidence and practical tools to begin, more of them are likely to talk with the people they love. Now we have the opportunity to test that properly.

Research and evaluation therefore belong inside the model rather than being something added later to prove that the work was worthwhile. We can work with researchers, clinicians, educators, students, donor families, transplant recipients, government agencies, and community partners to keep asking better questions. We can look at what the quantitative signals tell us and place them alongside the qualitative experiences that numbers struggle to capture.



Different perspectives. One purpose. Stronger learning. Better conversations.

Over time, that creates something far more valuable than a program that simply gets bigger.

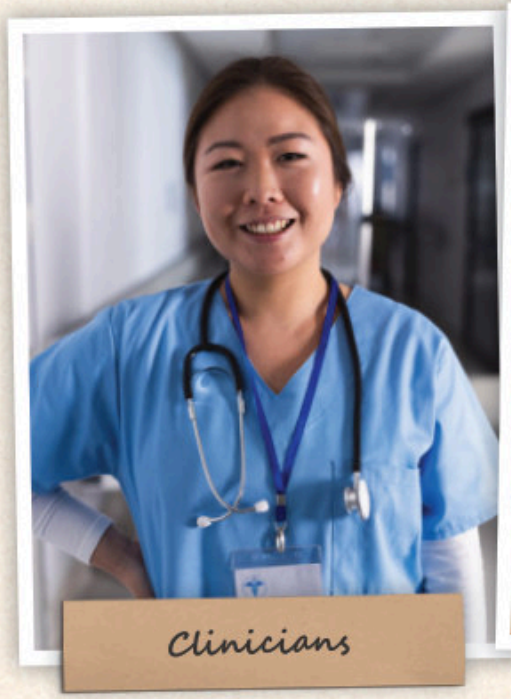


And that matters if Forever Grateful is going to travel.

A model delivered by one founder can rely heavily on instinct and experience. A model intended to reach schools, workplaces, hospitals, regional communities, and eventually be delivered by other voices needs to understand what is essential to the experience and what can adapt.

WHAT WE LEARN FROM MANY VOICES

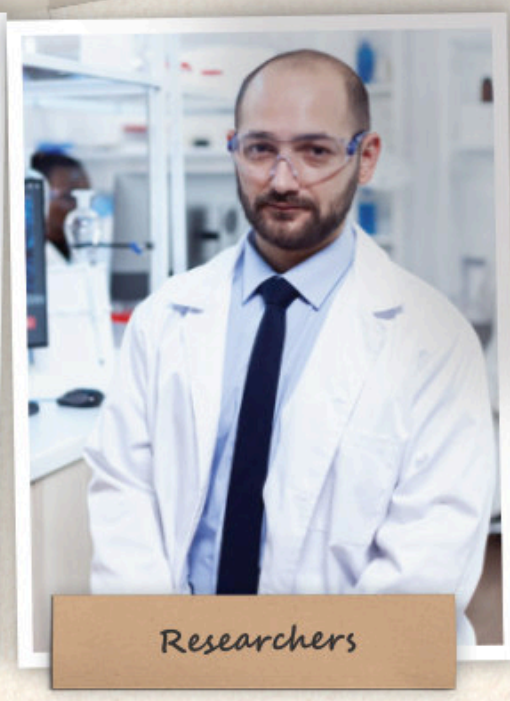
- Students feel things differently at different ages.
- Teachers see the ripple effects.
- Communities bring wisdom we don't always have.
- Donor families and recipients remind us what matters most.
- Researchers help us test and strengthen what we learn.



Clinicians

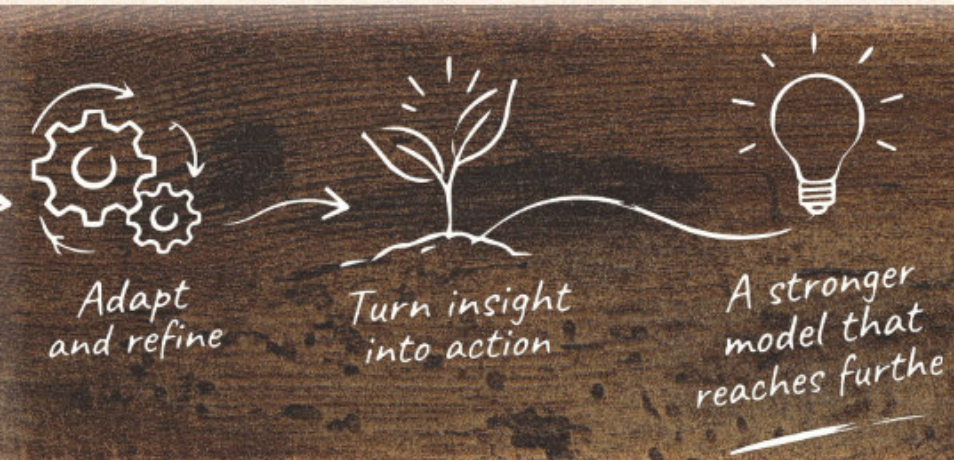


Community partners



Researchers

That learning cannot come from one perspective alone. The people experiencing the program, the people delivering it, and those who understand education, behaviour, health, community, and donation all see different parts of the picture. Bringing those perspectives together helps us test our assumptions, identify what we may have missed, and make the work stronger.



That is the work ahead, and there will be things we get wrong. I hope there are, because an organisation genuinely willing to discover that something is not working, change it, and learn from the people it exists to serve has a much better chance of building something that lasts.

If Forever Grateful is going to help Australian families talk about organ donation, we have to begin with a fairly obvious truth:

Australian families are wonderfully different.



That makes this work richer, and it also demands humility.

The way we talk about death, family responsibility, the body, medicine, faith, generosity, and what happens after we die can be shaped by culture, religion, language, age, personal experience, and the traditions we grew up with. Even within the same family, those beliefs can be completely different.

A question that opens a beautiful conversation in one community may feel inappropriate in another. The language that makes one person comfortable may make somebody else withdraw. Some families talk openly about death, while others have spent generations avoiding the subject. In some cultures, decisions are understood primarily through the individual. In others, family, community, faith, and collective responsibility may carry enormous weight.

Forever Grateful cannot walk into those spaces assuming we already know how the conversation should happen.

We need to listen.



That is why collaboration with communities is part of the model itself. As Forever Grateful grows, we want to work with multicultural organisations, faith communities, First Nations communities, educators, community leaders, health professionals, donor families, transplant recipients, and the people actually having these conversations to understand what makes them feel safe, relevant, and worth having.

Sometimes that will mean adapting language or changing a question completely. A story may need a different context. A Conversation Starter Pack may need to be translated, redesigned, or developed with a community rather than simply delivered to it. The person leading the conversation may need to come from within that community. And sometimes we may discover that something we thought was important simply is not.

That is the point of listening.

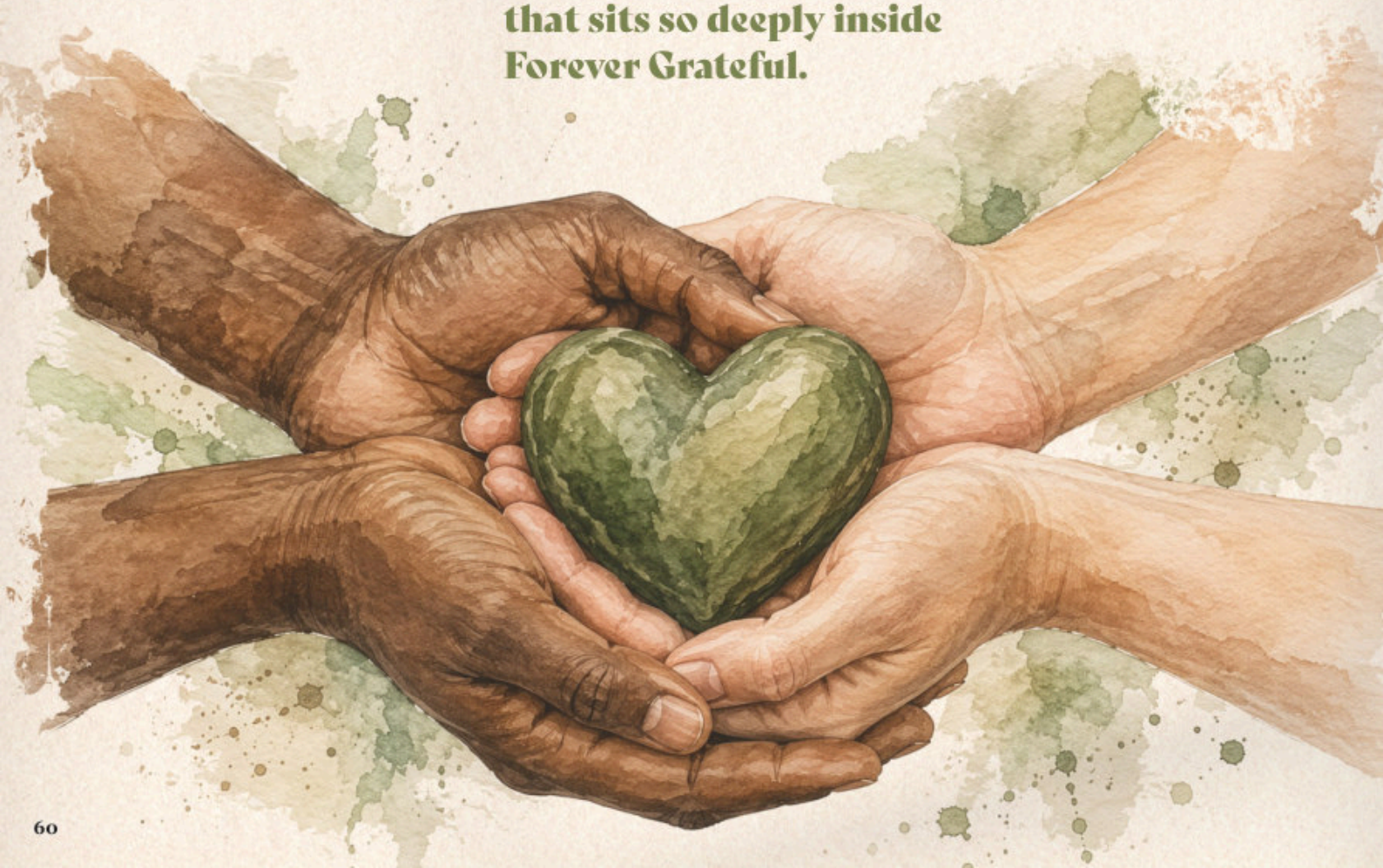
There is also a deeper reason this matters.

The purpose of Forever Grateful is not to persuade every Australian family to arrive at the same view about organ donation. A genuine family conversation must leave room for culture, faith, uncertainty, questions, disagreement, and personal choice.

What we can encourage is understanding.

If a family explores those beliefs together, they know more about one another than they did before. They may discover agreement or differences. They may find questions they want to explore further. Whatever happens, something previously unspoken has been given a voice.

And this brings us back to the idea of shared humanity that sits so deeply inside Forever Grateful.



I have a stranger's heart beating inside my chest.

I do not know what that person believed. I do not know their politics, their faith, their background, or the experiences that shaped them. None of those things determined whether their heart could save me.

At the same time, I would never want the basic philosophy that '***underneath all our skin we are all the same***' to erase the things that make people who they are. Perhaps its beauty lies somewhere deeper.



We can be profoundly different and still be connected in the most fundamental human ways.

Organ and tissue donation gives us an extraordinary physical illustration of that connection. Forever Grateful gives people somewhere to explore what it means to them.

That is why the future of this work cannot simply involve taking one successful presentation and delivering it to more people. It has to involve more people shaping the conversation.

Because if this is ultimately going to belong around Australian dinner tables, the people sitting around those tables should help us build it.

The conversation should never ask people to leave their identity at the door.

It should give them room to bring all of it with them.



BUILDING SOMETHING THAT LASTS

From a founder-led idea to an independent organisation.



Why Independence Matters

There is a reason Forever Grateful has developed outside the organisations that already carry responsibility for organ donation in Australia.

The existing system has an enormous job to do. Government agencies coordinate national activity, develop policy, support public awareness, and remain accountable for public investment. Health departments and hospitals operate within complex clinical systems. Donation specialists support families through extraordinarily difficult circumstances. Researchers build the evidence that improves practice. Community organisations represent people whose lives have been shaped by donation and transplantation.

Forever Grateful can work alongside all of them while occupying a different kind of space.





That independence gives us room to respond to what we learn.

If a question does not work, we can change it. If students respond to something unexpected, we can follow it. If a community tells us that our approach does not reflect their culture or experience, we can listen, learn, and rebuild it with them. If an idea works beautifully in a school but makes no sense in a workplace, we do not have to force the same model into both.



We can move quickly because learning is part of the work.



More importantly, independence gives Forever Grateful clarity about its role.

We do not carry responsibility for the clinical system, government policy, or a particular institutional outcome. That allows us to remain focused on the conversation itself and the complicated human territory around it.



We can ask questions without needing to know what answer somebody reaches.

We can work with government without being government. We can collaborate with the health system without becoming part of the health system. We can learn from donor families and transplant recipients without claiming to speak for either community.



That position matters because the space between awareness and family consent is not a simple one.

Somebody can know about organ donation without having considered their own wishes. They can decide what they believe without recording that decision. They can register without explaining it to the people they love. A family can know that someone supported donation without ever having understood why.

Each of those moments sits somewhere along the same human journey, and there is still much to learn about what helps people move from one to the next.

We can concentrate on something small, deeply human, and historically difficult to see:

The conversations people have with each other.

The Human Journey

Forever Grateful can spend time in that uncertain territory. We can explore the space between awareness, intention, registration, family understanding, and consent, while working alongside the organisations responsible for the wider donation system and learning from the people who experience it firsthand.



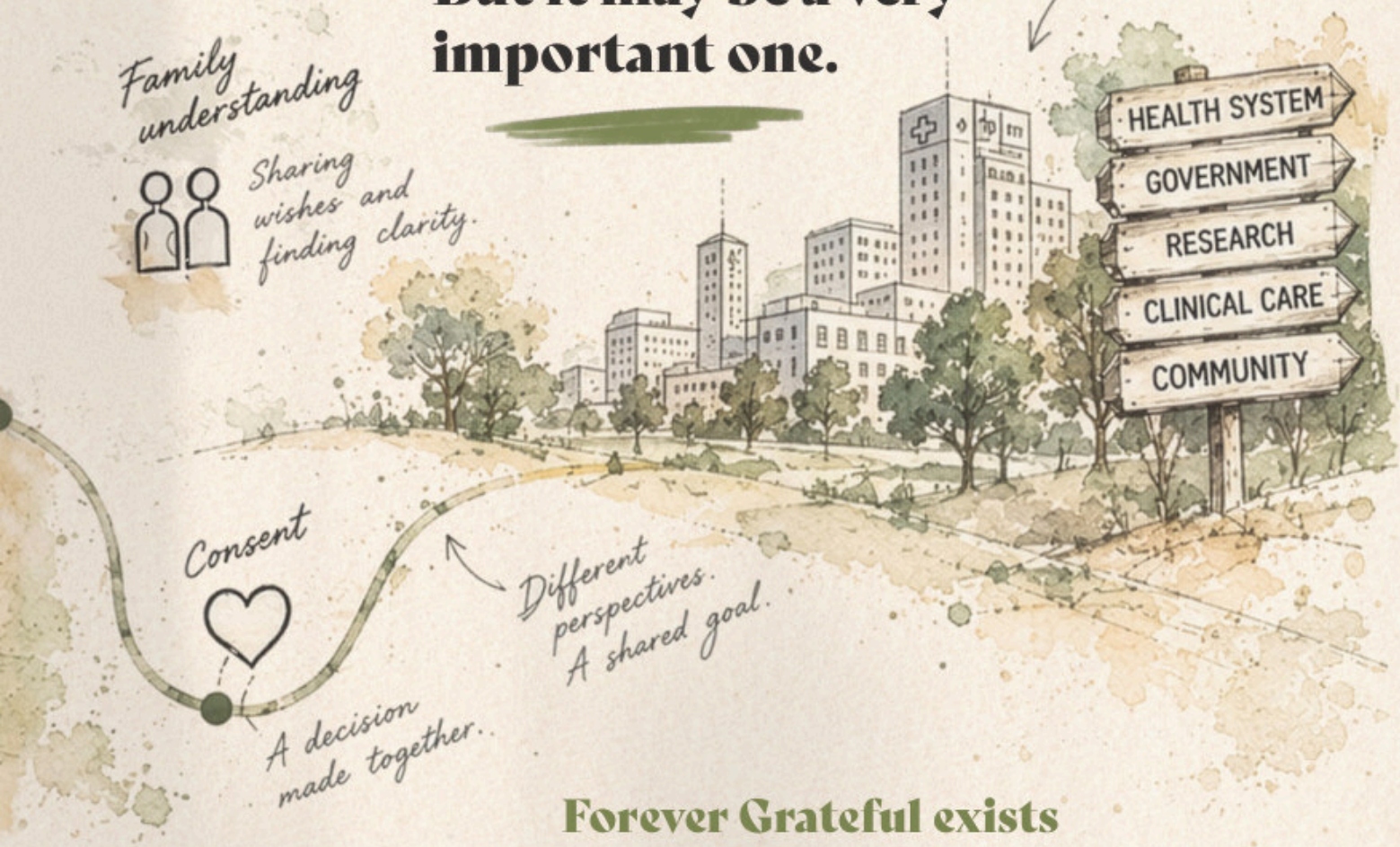


Independence does not mean working alone. In many ways, it makes collaboration even more important. Our value comes from being able to bring together perspectives that do not always meet in the same room, listen to what each can teach us, and then turn that learning into something practical that families can use in their own lives.

There is no need for Forever Grateful to become another version of something that already exists. The opportunity is to become exceptionally useful in the space that sits between them.

That is a small part of an enormous system.

But it may be a very important one.



This is where Forever Grateful focuses.

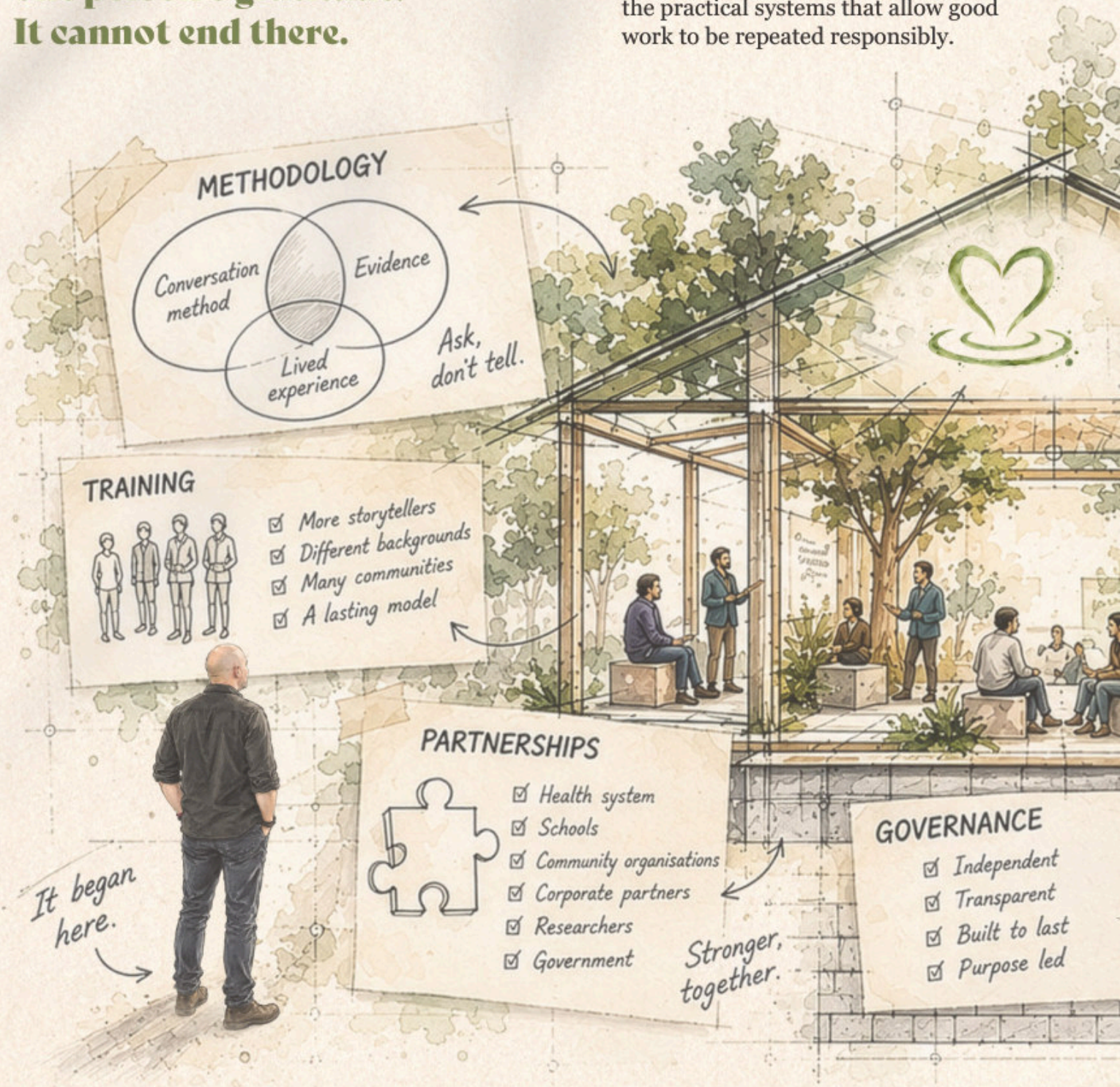
Forever Grateful exists to explore the human space between knowing about organ donation and knowing the wishes of the people we love.

What We Are Building

Forever Grateful began with one person's gratitude. It cannot end there.

If this work is going to matter at the scale we believe it can, it needs to become something capable of continuing far beyond my story, my voice, and the rooms I can personally reach. That means building an organisation with substance behind the emotion.

The lived experience will always matter. Human stories are what allow people to see themselves inside an issue that can otherwise feel distant. But around those stories we are building methodology, training, partnerships, research, evaluation, resources, governance, and the practical systems that allow good work to be repeated responsibly.



We are also building a model that other people can eventually deliver. Other transplant recipients. Donor family members. People whose lives have been touched by donation in completely different ways. People from different cultures and communities who can bring conversations into places where my voice may never be the right one. Over time, Forever Grateful should contain many stories.

That is how the organisation becomes larger than its founder while remaining deeply human.

The same principle applies to the Conversation Starter Packs. What began as something tangible to take home after a presentation can become a platform for different conversations, audiences, communities, languages, and experiences. The schools program can develop through evidence gathered from students and educators. Workplace programs can evolve through corporate partnerships. Community programs can be built with the communities themselves. Digital experiences can take the methodology into places geography makes difficult to reach. Research can help us understand what is happening, challenge our assumptions, and strengthen the behavioural thinking underneath everything we do.

Through all of it, the purpose remains remarkably focused.



We want more Australians to know the wishes of the people they love.

That focus gives us somewhere useful to stand within a much larger system.

Australia already has extraordinary clinical expertise. It has national coordination, donation specialists, hospitals, researchers, government agencies, community organisations, transplant advocates, and donor families who have spent decades building knowledge, awareness, and trust.

Forever Grateful can add something very specific to that collective effort.

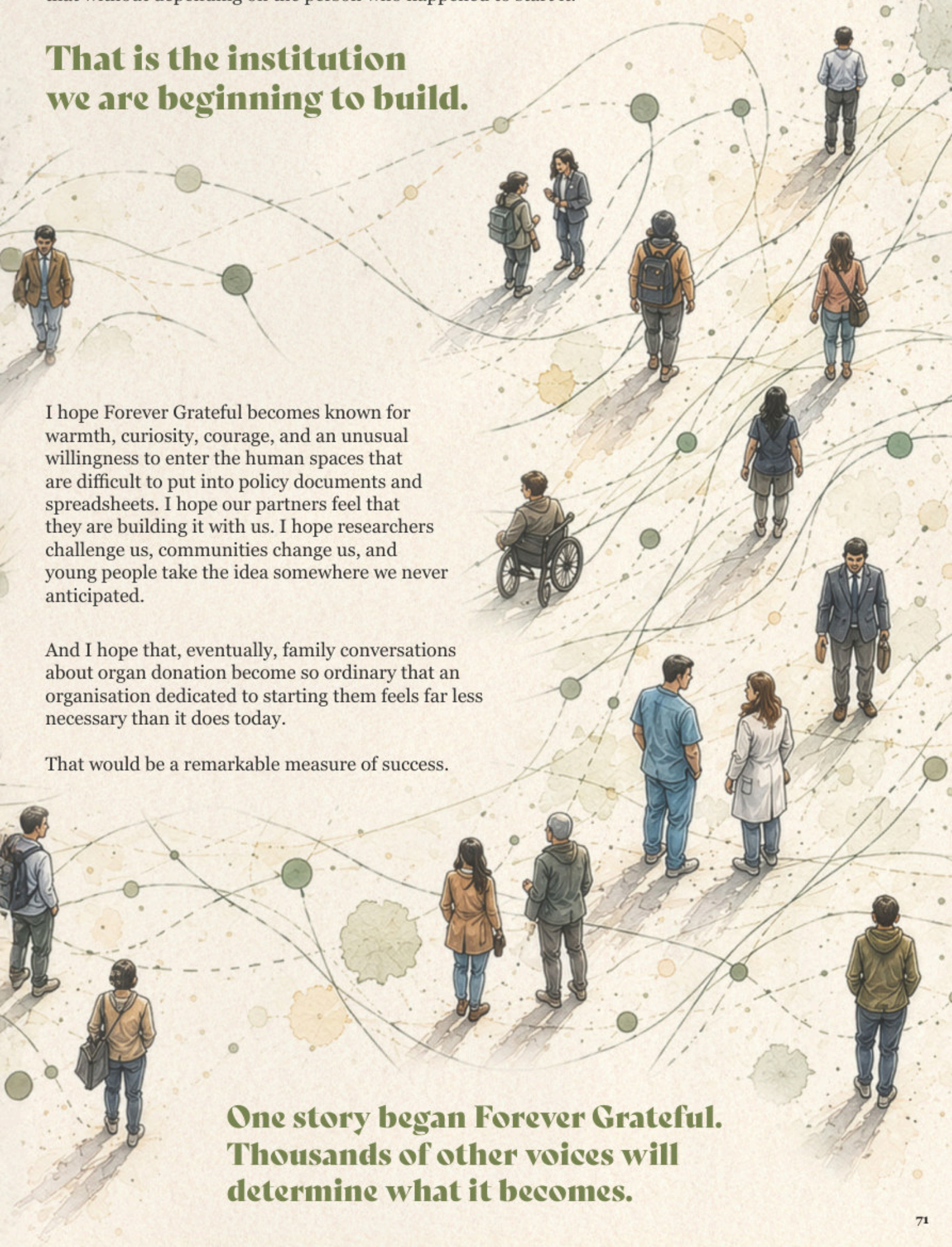
We can become exceptionally good at helping people begin the conversation.



There is enormous depth behind that simple ambition. It means understanding human behaviour and why people avoid difficult subjects. It means designing experiences people actually want to participate in, respecting culture, faith, family dynamics, and individual choice, and creating practical tools that survive beyond a presentation. It means developing responsible ways to understand the signals around something inherently private, constantly listening to the people experiencing the work, and being willing to change.

Eventually, it means building an organisation capable of doing all of that without depending on the person who happened to start it.

That is the institution we are beginning to build.



I hope Forever Grateful becomes known for warmth, curiosity, courage, and an unusual willingness to enter the human spaces that are difficult to put into policy documents and spreadsheets. I hope our partners feel that they are building it with us. I hope researchers challenge us, communities change us, and young people take the idea somewhere we never anticipated.

And I hope that, eventually, family conversations about organ donation become so ordinary that an organisation dedicated to starting them feels far less necessary than it does today.

That would be a remarkable measure of success.

One story began Forever Grateful. Thousands of other voices will determine what it becomes.

VI



WHAT COMES NEXT

An invitation to build it with us.



What Partnership Makes Possible

Forever Grateful has reached an interesting point in its life. The idea exists. The methodology exists. The programs are beginning to move into the world. Schools are opening their doors, communities are engaging, and relationships are growing across government, health, research, education, donation, transplantation, and philanthropy.

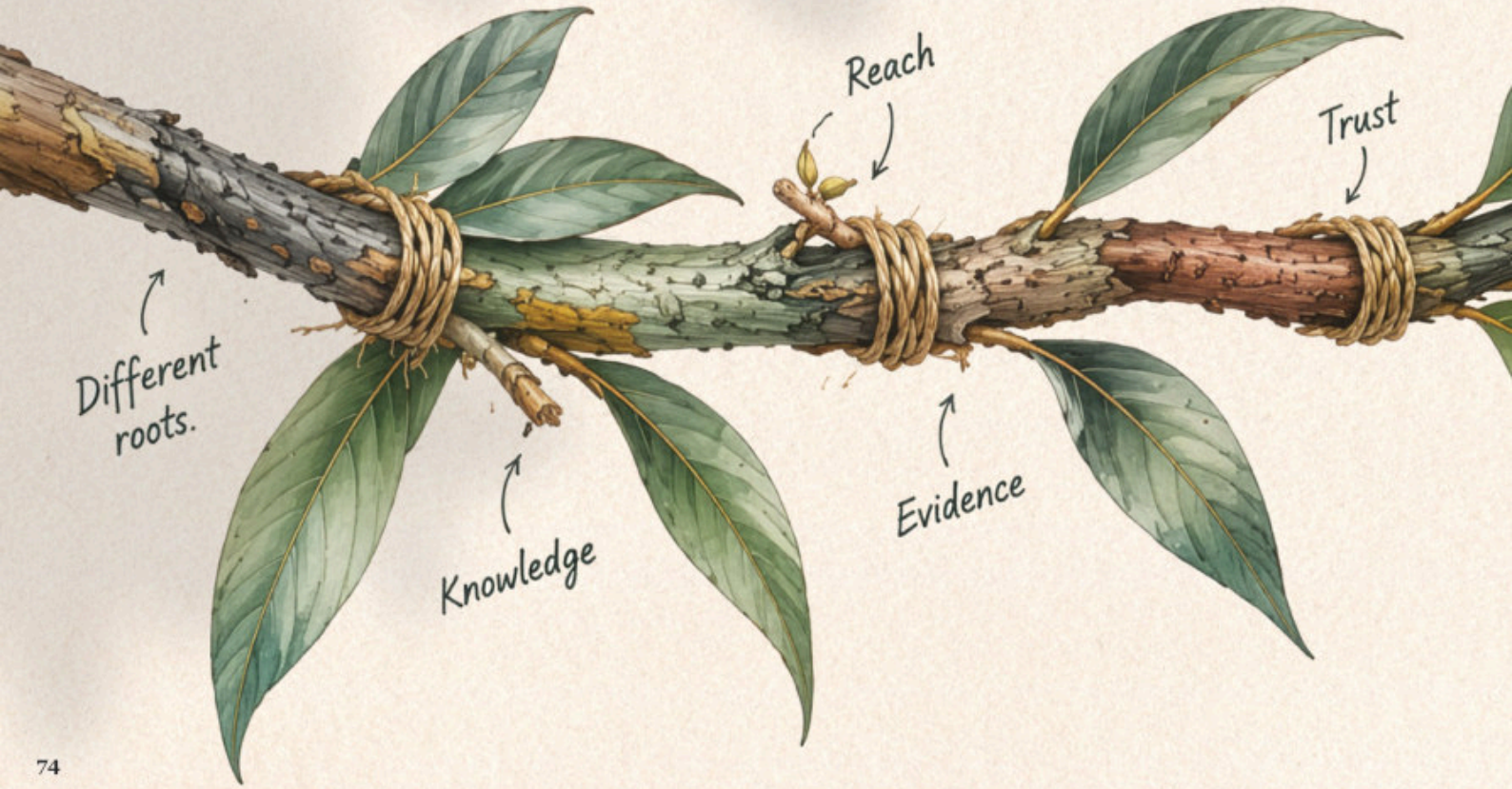
We now have the opportunity to find out what this can become. And that is where partnership matters.

There is a temptation when talking about partnership to immediately talk about money. Of course funding matters. Conversation Starter Packs have to be produced. Schools have to be reached. Presenters have to travel. Programs need coordination, evaluation, research, technology, communications, and the infrastructure that allows a young organisation to grow responsibly.

But some of the most valuable things people have already given Forever Grateful have had nothing to do with a cheque.

They have opened a door, made an introduction, shared expertise, challenged an assumption, invited us into a school, hospital, workplace, research conversation, or community, helped solve a problem, or put us in front of somebody we would never otherwise have met.

Sometimes they simply believed early enough to say, 'I think there is something in this.'



That is the kind of partnership we want to build because the opportunity in front of Forever Grateful is larger than any one organisation can realise alone.



Corporate partner

can help us enter workplaces across Australia and put conversations into the homes of thousands of employees.

Education partner



can help us understand how this belongs within schools and how young people can become confident leaders of family conversations.

Research partner



can help us test the behavioural model, strengthen the evidence, and turn early learning into something more substantial.

Community partner



can help us listen before we speak and build conversations that genuinely belong within the communities having them.



Health partner

can connect lived experience with clinical knowledge and ensure the work remains grounded in the realities of donation and transplantation.

Philanthropic partner



can give us something particularly valuable at this stage: the freedom to learn. They can help support the pilots, prototypes, evaluation, people, and infrastructure that allow a promising idea to become a proven one.

Government partner



can ultimately have something stronger to work with because that learning has happened.

This is one of the reasons independence and collaboration sit so comfortably together for Forever Grateful. We can test ideas on a small scale, learn quickly, and change direction when we need to. At the same time, we can draw upon the knowledge, reach, experience, and credibility of people who have spent decades building Australia's donation and transplantation system.

Partnerships allow those strengths to meet.

What Success Could Look Like

There is a version of the future I think about often.

It does not begin with Forever Grateful becoming a large organisation. It begins with the conversation becoming ordinary.

A student comes home from school and asks their family what they think about organ donation. Someone hears a story at work and raises it with their partner that evening. A parent tells their children they have registered and explains why. A family disagrees, talks about it, asks questions, and understands one another a little better afterwards.

None of those moments would look particularly remarkable from the outside. That is precisely the point.

Gradually, talking about our wishes could become something families are more comfortable doing. A conversation might begin in one home and reappear years later in another.



Young Australians could grow up understanding that talking about organ donation with their family is normal. Workplaces could become places where somebody can raise the subject without it immediately feeling confronting or strange.

Communities could develop their own ways of exploring donation through their culture, faith, language, values, and family traditions.

And people who choose to register their decision could also tell the people they love why they made it.

If enough of those ordinary conversations happen, something begins to accumulate. Not simply awareness, but understanding between people who may one day be asked to speak for one another.

Imagine, years from now, a family being approached about organ donation at the worst moment of their lives. They are grieving and overwhelmed. They wish desperately that none of this were happening. But when the question comes, they recognise it. They remember the conversation. They know what the person they love wanted, and they understand why.

Then, if the moment ever comes, fewer families would be left searching for an answer they were never given.

Perhaps they even feel what so many donor families have described to me: PRIDE.



An Invitation

Forever Grateful began because I wanted to understand how a family I had never met made a decision that allowed me to keep living.

Exploring that question has taken me into hospitals, schools, workplaces, community rooms, research conversations, donor family stories, and places I could never have imagined when this began.

Along the way, something simple became increasingly clear.

Families need help having this conversation before they ever need the answer.

We now have an opportunity to help make that easier, and to build something capable of carrying the idea much further than one story ever could.

But Forever Grateful was never going to become that alone.

What happens next will depend on the people who choose to join us.



Somewhere in Australia tonight, families are sitting around dinner tables, driving home together, watching television, making plans for the weekend, arguing about something trivial, laughing at something ridiculous, and talking about all the ordinary things families talk about.

Most of them will never face a decision about organ donation.

Some will.

We cannot know which ones.

But we can give more families a reason to have the conversation while there is still time to ask each other what they think.

That is what we are building.

And if you believe that conversation is worth having, there is a place for you in what comes next.



There is one last thing I want you to understand about Forever Grateful.

Behind all the methodology, measurement, research, partnerships, programs, and plans is something very simple.

People get to live.

Every transplant statistic represents somebody who gets another morning. Another birthday. Another Christmas that, at one point, their family may have believed would never come.

They get to go home, complain about traffic, make dinner, walk the dog, embarrass their children, fall in love, go back to work, make plans, change plans, waste an afternoon, and experience all the beautifully ordinary things that make up a life.

I know because I have been given those things.



There is a question people sometimes ask me about receiving someone else's heart. Did it change you?

The answer is yes, just not in the way people sometimes imagine. I did not wake up with somebody else's personality or memories. There was no mysterious transformation worthy of a television series.

What changed me was something far more human.

You cannot stand on the edge of life and be rescued by a complete stranger without it changing the way you see the world. Gratitude arrives. Perspective arrives. And, if you are fortunate, purpose arrives too.

They are the other gifts that can accompany transplantation, whatever organ has been received and wherever it sits in the body.



You understand that time is precious because you came frighteningly close to running out of it. You understand that ordinary days are not ordinary at all. And you understand that somewhere behind the life you were given back is a family whose story continued very differently.



While one family celebrates the Christmas morning that should never have happened, there may be an empty chair at another family's table. That is the profound reality of organ donation. Life and loss exist together. The gift does not erase the grief that made it possible, and the recipient's joy does not fill the empty chair.

Both families carry something forward from the same moment, in completely different ways.



Perhaps that is why I have always struggled to find a word large enough for what organ donation means. It is rare, precious, deeply human, and an extraordinary expression of what one person can make possible for another.

There is a line I often use when I speak about my own transplant. It began with all those familiar expressions we have about the heart, and over time it became the simplest way I know to describe the life I now have.

I love my family from the bottom of another man's heart.

That heart has carried me through years I was never promised. It has been there while I watched my son grow older. It gave me the time to meet the love of my life. In fact, I met her two years to the day after I had been told I might have just 48 hours left to live.

I think about that sometimes.

There was a whole life waiting for me that I did not yet know existed.

The people I had not met. The places I had not been. The Christmas mornings that had not happened. The conversations I had not had. The person my child would become. The ordinary mornings when nothing remarkable happens and you are simply grateful to be there for them.

My transplant gave me those things, and every day another man's heart carries me through them.



That heart has taken me back into hospitals, into schools and workplaces, onto stages, and into conversations with people I would never otherwise have met.

Now it has brought me here, to Forever Grateful, an organisation built from gratitude for one extraordinary gift and a determination to help more families understand each other before they are ever asked to make an extraordinary decision of their own.

Because somewhere behind the life I have been given is another family. There is an empty chair in their story and Christmas mornings in mine that should never have happened.

Both are true.

Their generosity deserves more from us than admiration. It deserves thought, understanding, and above all, conversation.

That conversation does not need to be perfect. You do not need to know everything about organ donation before you begin. You do not need a presentation, a campaign, or a special occasion.

You simply need someone you care about and the curiosity to ask what they think.

Somewhere, families are sitting around dinner tables talking about their day. Most of those conversations will be forgotten. One of them might matter for the rest of their lives.

Let's give them a reason to have it.

From the bottom of another man's heart, thank you for being part of one.

Jayden Cummins

Founder, Forever Grateful Ltd

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Forever Grateful exists to strengthen the final human decision in organ donation by making meaningful family conversations easier to begin.

To download this document, visit www.forevergrateful.com.au/thesis

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.