



Tragedy inspires film about the gift of life

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When producer Anita Belgiorno-Nettis lost her brother Mattia in a car accident, her family experienced the harrowing decision of whether or not to donate his organs.

Mattia was a marathon runner, only 36 when he died, leaving his heartbroken and unprepared loved ones with the struggle to decide what he would want.

Five recipients were saved as a result of their choice to donate.

His father described this in the poem Mattia's Last Run as "passing the baton of his young life to another young life".

Inspired by her loss and the dire statistics of organ donation in Australia, Belgiorno-Nettis enlisted the help of The Black Balloon producer Tristram Miall, veteran writer Peter Schreck and filmmaker Jeremy Cumpston to make a short film about the importance of expressing your wishes, to save your family from a

difficult and avoidable dilemma.

The Last Race is a short drama featuring three stories that intertwine in heartbreaking circumstances. A 15-year-old girl with cystic fibrosis, running out of time for a lung transplant; a 45-year-old patient on the long-term waiting list; and the family of a brain-dead accident victim struggling to cope with the weight of their decision.

Director Jeremy Cumpston, a practising doctor and former star of Channel Seven's hospital drama All Saints, said the story had affected everyone involved and united them to do justice to its message. "Everyone was aware of why this was being made. Cast and crew, everyone," he said.

"When Anita's family lost their son and brother she got involved in DonateLife and was made aware of the horrendous statistics in regards to organ donation. Instead of just accepting that, she decided

to completely fund the project out of her own pocket."

Cumpston said the poem was one of the most beautiful he'd ever read, and inspired the film's plot and direction. It also influenced their decision to make a narrative drama rather than a documentary. Put together in eight weeks the film had the full support of Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital.

Cumpston said the hospital had one of the top transplant teams in the country, and their co-operation was a testament to the importance of the issue.

About 1700 Australians are on organ transplant waiting lists, but less than one in five people have discussed their donation wishes with their loved ones. **i**

To coincide with DonateLife Week which ends on Sunday, **The Last Race** airs on Sunday at 6.30pm on ABC1.



DIRECTOR Jeremy Cumpston