

Kate Sparks is continuing the advocacy started by her daughter Jessica.



The legacy of a fierce organ and blood donation advocate is being carried on, with Kate Sparks continuing her daughter Jessica's mission by sharing her story of strength and selflessness to promote conversations and change within the community.

Jessica Sparks was an employee of the CEDoW and lived with cystic fibrosis. She spent much of her life in and out of hospital often in ill health, but despite her personal battles her mum said Jess was constantly thinking of others.

"She was still just ever present with people; she was warm and welcoming and just genuinely interested in people's stories," Kate said.

"I really do believe she's just a one in a million sort of girl, just a bright light, heaven sent.

"She was here for a really short time but a very special purpose."

Jess needed two double lung transplants, but seeing others waiting for lifesaving treatment launched her into action.

She founded the non-profit organisation Sparking Life and was devoted to spreading the message of the importance of organ and tissue donation.

"She knew what that second chance of life meant and she wanted that for other people as well," Kate said.

"She was just all for other people and having the experience herself and she travelled the road of being ill and having transplant; she just felt that she needed to do something for others."

Jess passed away in 2022, but Kate was committed to continuing her important work.

"I could not let her non-profit sit there and do nothing so I actually brought it back in her honour as a legacy to her work," Kate said.

"I affiliated Sparking Life with Lifeblood because organ and tissue donation and Lifeblood go hand-in-hand."

Kate spread Jess' message through presentations to better inform the community and start vital conversations, and despite her unimaginable pain, she has found strength through seeing the impact her daughter's story is making.



"The grief is everlasting, it is every day; there's no end to grief," Kate said.

"At first it was quite a challenge to talk about because it was still raw, but I think as I've seen the amazing reaction of people – and the fact that people have just jumped on board to be blood and plasma donors so readily – obviously this story of Jess has resonated with them.



“For me it’s almost as if her strength has passed through her story to me and it gives me the strength to continue advocating for organ and tissue donation and blood and plasma donation.

“It gives me just such a motivation to gather as many people along the journey as I can, so I can with Jess’ legacy, make a difference on her behalf because she would’ve done incredible things with this.”

Eighteen per cent of blood donated through Lifeblood is used for heart, organ and other non-orthopaedic surgeries. Other recipients include those with cancer and blood disease, stomach and kidney disease, fractures and joint replacements and anaemia.

One blood donation can save three lives.

“If we have one person that signs up to be a blood or plasma donor we hope that has a rippling effect and that they bring along family and friends and it is like a little stone in the pond that creates the ripple that goes out to lots of different people,” Kate said.

Those aged 16 or older can sign up to the organ registry but discussing donation with your loved ones is just as important as filling out the form.

“To make sure that your wishes are really made crystal clear with your family so in the event that something happens to you that there’s not that, in a time of incredible sadness and incredible desperate feelings, that it’s not left to families to think about whether that person would have wanted to donate organs,” Kate said.

“If your thoughts are known to your family that decision becomes so much easier.”

Kate hoped that spreading Jess’ story even further would help people better understand the impact of organ and blood donations, and encouraged businesses, schools or other organisations to reach out.

“My wish for Sparking Life is to grow and to permeate all sorts of people’s lives.

“From people in businesses that can help impact Sparking Life, and to run-of-the-mill people in the street.

“Just to get it out there to politicians and all sorts of people.

“To stretch and reach as far as it can.”

For more information or to get in touch with Kate visit the [Sparking Life Instagram page](#).

You can register as an organ donor at [DonateLife](#) or arrange blood donation through [Lifeblood](#). There are plenty of opportunities to make appointments and donate for those in need. Below is a list of dates when the LifeBlood Van is in Bowral.

At your first donation it would be great if you could say, "Could I join the **SPARKING LIFE ST THOMAS AQUINAS BOWRAL TEAM**".

October: Monday 6th - Sunday 12th

November: Monday 24th - Sunday 30<sup>th</sup>