



MEDIA RELEASE

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WIDOWS OF PARRAMATTA - WEB SERIES OF THREE ARABIC SPEAKING WIDOWS LAUNCHED TO PROMOTE ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION IN THE ARABIC COMMUNITY

The NSW Organ and Tissue Donation Service and the NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service today launched the new 5-part docu-comedy web series - *Widows of Parramatta* - to highlight the importance of organ and tissue donation in the Arab speaking community.

Widows of Parramatta explores the friendship of three elderly Lebanese-Australian widows, Layla Kisrwni, Jamilie Joseph and Genevieve Kahwaji (Jenny) who have been friends and neighbours for 15 years in Parramatta. The web is a hilarious and captivating web series that will draw audiences close to appreciate the stories of the widows, their way of life after the death of their husbands and their views about organ and tissue donation.

Black comedy in tone, *Widows of Parramatta* will see the widows remembering the men in their lives and the rituals around burying them. They talk about plans for their own funerals and consider their mortality regularly, contemplating on the question, "What if their husband's heart were in someone else's body?"

As Jenny says, "In our time, they never spoke about organ and tissue donation but how times have changed. Now they can put my liver in another body to save someone else's life."

In the series, the widows recall early times in Australia and all that was weird and wonderful about being a migrant in the 1950's.

Widows of Parramatta is directed by Arab Australian filmmaker, Fadia Abboud, who has been the co-director of the Arab Film Festival Australia since 2007. In 2017 Fadia co-directed an episode of 'Here Come the Habibs' (Season 2) with Darren Ashton, and directed the documentary, 'I Remember 1948' on SBS. Her short film, 'Big Trouble Little Fish' was funded by Parramatta City Council and screened at Flickerfest.

Fadia explains, "Layla lived next door to Judy for 10 years and then moved to the other side of Parramatta and has lived next door to Jenny for the last 35 years.

On the importance of registering on the Australian Organ Donor Register, Layla said, "I was shocked upon learning the facts on organ and tissue donation and I believe it is important to have these conversations in our community". It is particularly important to discuss donation with your loved ones. Families play a crucial role in the donation process because they are asked to consent before donation proceeds.

Captivating and hilarious with unusual and charismatic characters, the *Widows of Parramatta* will draw you close to appreciate the stories of the widows, and their way of life after the death of their husbands.

For more information about organ and tissue donation, including details about how to register your decision to become a donor, visit donatelife.gov.au.

Join the conversation: www.facebook.com/WidowsofParramatta / [#WidowsofParramatta](https://www.instagram.com/WidowsofParramatta)

MEDIA

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Editors Notes:

WIDOWS OF PARRAMATTA

ABOUT FADIA ABOUD

Fadia Abboud has been the co-director of the Arab Film Festival Australia since 2007. Her first film screened at the first Arab Film Festival in 2001. In 2017 Fadia co-directed an episode of HERE COME THE HABIBS (Channel 9) Season 2 with Darren Ashton. Fadia directed a documentary called I REMEMBER 1948 which was screened on SBS. Her short film, BIG TROUBLE LITTLE FISH was funded by Parramatta City Council and screened at Flickerfest. Fadia has worked at Information & Cultural Exchange (ICE) where she helped develop cultural programs using multimedia to empower refugee and migrant communities in Western Sydney.

ABOUT THE NSW MULTICULTURAL HEALTH COMMUNICATION SERVICE

The NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service (MHCS) was established by the NSW Ministry of Health to co-ordinate state-wide communication strategies with communities who speak a language other than English. A key objective of the service is to develop and establish standards of best practice in communication with these communities.

MHCS has developed a range of award winning multicultural social marketing and communication campaigns.

In 2016, MHCS was the recipient of the Australian Multicultural Marketing Award for the Public Sector Category for the 'Life Giving Stories: Storytellers on the Ultimate Gift of Life' Multiplatform Strategy for the Organ and Tissue Donation Multicultural Campaign – together with The NSW Organ and Tissue Donation Service.

MHCS also won the Australian Multicultural Marketing Award 2017 for the Arts and Culture Category together with Pink Sari Inc. for the 'Pink Sari Project National Songwriting Competition' Raising breast screening awareness within Indian and Sri Lankan communities through the power music.

ABOUT THE NSW ORGAN TISSUE DONATION SERVICE

The NSW Organ and Tissue Donation Service (OTDS) is responsible for coordinating life-changing organ and tissue donations across the state.

The OTDS is committed to saving and improving lives through organ and tissue donation, working closely with hospital-based donation medical specialists and nurses to increase donation rates in NSW.

Each year the lives of thousands of Australians are transformed through organ and tissue transplantations however more donors are needed for the 1,400 Australians currently on the transplant waiting lists.

We urge every family in NSW to learn the facts about organ and tissue donation, register their donation decision on the Australian Organ Donor Register, and discuss this with their loved ones. It's a decision that takes just one minute and could one day save a life.

For more information about organ and tissue donation, including details about how to register your decision to become a donor, visit donatelife.gov.au.