

Centre for the Humanities and Medicine
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Death: Philosophy, Therapy, Medicine

**Cold Enough To Cut? Challenges in the Diagnosis of Death for Organ
Donation**

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The 'Dead Donor' rule requires that organs for transplantation be retrieved only from donors who are dead. In Australia, death may be diagnosed in two ways, based upon either permanent cessation of all function of the brain, or permanent cessation of the circulation. Circulatory criteria are used for donations after cardiac death (DCD, also known as non-heart beating donation). Donations after cardiac death require rapid and accurate diagnosis of death as, to be viable, organs must be removed as soon as possible once the circulation stops.

This paper draws upon interviews with practitioners to explore some of the fears and tensions that arise in the practice of donation after cardiac death.