

Jewish News

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Chevra retreats on organ donors

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THE Sydney Chevra Kadisha has backed down from its opposition to Jewish burials for organ donors.

In a letter this week to the Brisbane Chevra Kadisha, Sydney Chevra Kadisha president David Ainsworth said: "I am regret [sic] that the brief information sent to you regarding donors of organs was incorrect. As I mentioned to you, you should ask an Orthodox rabbi."

Last week, the *AJN* reported a let-

ter sent by Ainsworth on August 4 to his Brisbane counterpart, saying that organ donation is not permitted under Jewish law, and would preclude a deceased person from tahara (ritual cleansing) and a Jewish burial.

In a complete reversal, Ainsworth confirmed that the Sydney chevra, like its Melbourne counterpart, would not refuse a Jewish tahara – "except in cases of infectious disease" – and burial to any Jewish person.

The Great Synagogue's senior

rabbi, Jeremy Lawrence, told the *AJN* that the chevra usually consulted with the Sydney Beth Din on questions of halacha; however it did not do so in this case.

The beth din would have outlined cases where organ donors would be permitted a Jewish burial, Rabbi Lawrence explained.

"There are any number of cases where halacha has allowed the transplant of organs and tissue.

"It does not allow the taking of

body parts for pure research purposes or experimentation by students," he added.

In Israel and the USA, a special organ-donor-card system exists, whereby a halachic authority is immediately contacted for instructions when a potential-donor situation arises.

"I would definitely support the establishment of such a system here, under an appropriately-qualified beth din," Rabbi Lawrence said.