

MEDIA RELEASE

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Kidney Health Australia Welcomes Announcement to Close the Gap

Kidney Health Australia warmly welcomes today's announcement by the Australian Greens for \$10 million in funding to address chronic kidney disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The announcement was made as part of a broader 'Closing the Gap' health policy, and it addresses many of the key issues Kidney Health Australia has been calling for national leadership on during the campaign.

"Kidney Health Australia has been calling for federal leadership in addressing kidney disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We believe there is a need to bring Australia's leading experts together with health providers and peak bodies to look at what needs to be done to address this critical issue, and develop a plan for the nation," said Kidney Health Australia's Interim CEO, Ms Rosanna Care.

"It's therefore very welcome news that the Australian Greens have committed \$2 million towards developing a National Action Plan on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander chronic kidney disease in their platform," she said.

Addressing kidney disease is complex and requires cross-portfolio government engagement and coordination. Gaining access to dialysis treatment close to home, and poor rates of kidney transplantation compared to non-Indigenous Australians are key issues to be tackled. Getting dialysis or a transplant often means leaving country for dialysis, and dealing with inadequate accommodation, transport and social support. Some people feel they have no option but to forgo treatments, so they can remain on country with their families.

"Today's additional announcement of \$4 million towards education and training, and a further \$4 million towards kidney patient support in remote and regional locations is great news. We know that in remote locations more than a quarter of adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have signs of early kidney disease. Sadly, in remote areas that figure skyrockets to more than 36 per cent," said Ms Care.

Training of the existing health workforce and developing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce to detect, educate and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kidney consumers will delay the progression of kidney disease, and therefore dialysis.

In remote and very remote areas of Australia, the rate of end stage kidney disease (ESKD) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is up to 20 times higher than amongst non-Indigenous Australians.

Kidney Health Australia's key report into this issue, '*Kidney Health for All*', outlined a number of key issues that require national, state and territory action in a coordinated way if any attempt is to be made to tackle kidney disease.

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“In developing the report, we highlighted the need to look not just at dialysis itself – but to consider the impact of patient support services, the critical role of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce, and culturally appropriate care, can have on outcomes.”

“We welcome today’s commitment, which is a significant step forward in addressing the current, and shocking level of kidney disease in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The problem we face is not insurmountable. We can reduce the kidney health gap, and for that reason we continue to call on all sides of politics to continue to commit funding and support to tackling kidney disease.”

For more information on Kidney Health Week and to read the full *‘Tackling Kidney Disease: A national action plan to reduce Australia’s kidney disease burden’*, *Kidney Health Australia’s Budget Submission* or *‘Kidney Health for All’* reports, visit kidney.org.au.

Kidney Health Australia, formerly the Australian Kidney Foundation, is a national health care charity with a vision 'to save and improve the lives of Australians affected by kidney disease'. As the national peak body, Kidney Health Australia promotes good kidney health through delivery of programs in education, advocacy, research and support.

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