

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

FEDERAL BUDGET EXTENDS LIVING DONOR SCHEME

Kidney Health Australia welcomes the Federal Government's commitment to continue to fund the *Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors* Programme for a further two years, and congratulates the Government on its decision to extend the leave period from six to nine weeks.

The first scheme of its kind in Australia, the *Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors* Programme was launched as a two-year pilot in 2013, and provided six weeks paid leave, at minimum wage rates, to assist live organ donors when they require time away from their job for work-up surgery and recovery.

CEO of Kidney Health Australia, Ms Anne Wilson, commended the Government for recognising the significant success of the scheme and investing in it for a further two years.

"This is an issue we have strongly advocated for and, in July 2013, we saw our efforts come to fruition with the commencement of the two-year pilot of the *Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors Scheme*, which provides much needed support to those Australians who give the ultimate gift – the gift of life," said Ms Wilson.

"Kidney Health Australia has been thrilled to see the positive results the scheme has yielded thus far – as of March 31 2015, 210 Australians have registered for the scheme, and 128 claims have been paid – this number has exceeded expectations and indicates the gap in support that this scheme is filling," continued Ms Wilson, "Interestingly, between 2008 and 2012 we saw a continual decline in live organ donation, yet during the period of the scheme's operation in 2014 we saw a dramatic halt to the live kidney donation decline and – remarkably – a 7% increase."

"We also know that medical communities in other countries, such as the United States, are currently looking at effective ways to address live donor financial barriers," added Ms Wilson, "so it is very encouraging – and timely – to see the Australian Government at the forefront of this issue on the world stage."

Kidney Health Australia urges the Commonwealth to consider including the management and oversight of living organ donation under the Australian Organ and Tissue Authority (OTA), and looks forward to continuing its work with Government to secure the *Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors* scheme on an ongoing basis, and supporting the sector to increase Australia's organ donation rate.

Kidney Health Australia 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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