



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**March 29, 2015**

### **KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE TO TACKLE KIDNEY ISSUES**

Kidney Health Australia is celebrating two significant announcements made last week – the same week that Australia used World Kidney Day to focus on the critical issue of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Kidney Health. The announcements indicate both an ongoing commitment to support for living donors, and an increased focus on funding critical research.

At its Parliamentary Breakfast to mark World Kidney Day, supported by the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology (ANZSN) and Close The Gap Campaign Steering Committee, Kidney Health Australia was encouraged to hear the issue of organ donation raised.

"Noting the importance of organ donation to the kidney sector, including live organ donation, Kidney Health Australia was very pleased to hear the Assistant Minister for Health, Senator the Hon Fiona Nash, confirm the Government's ongoing commitment to supporting organ donors," said Ms Anne Wilson, CEO of Kidney Health Australia.

"Kidney Health Australia welcomes the Government's announcement that organ donation efforts will continue to be supported through key measures, including the Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors Programme, going forward," she continued.

"This is particularly heartening to hear, as the initial trial of this important and successful scheme ends this June, and the announcement signals an ongoing commitment to continue the scheme on a more permanent basis, giving much needed certainty to future live organ donors."

The announcement earlier in the week of \$10,141,300 to fund critical medical research, which will investigate ways to improve the lives of those living with chronic kidney disease, has also been applauded.

"This announcement is a big step forward in tackling the growing problem of kidney disease," said Ms Wilson, "This research will inform healthcare decisions made by clinicians, policy makers, and patients and cover the full spectrum of kidney disease, from its earliest stages through to dialysis and transplantation."

The grant, the largest ever awarded in Australia to the kidney sector by the National Health and Medical Research Council, is recognition of the increasing burden of kidney disease on Australia's health system.

"Kidney disease is truly an insidious disease that affects thousands of Australians – indeed, 56 Australians die each day from kidney related disease – so it is critical we find ways to increase early detection, improve treatment options and ultimately the quality of life of patients," said Dr Tim Mathew, Kidney Health Australia's National Medical Director.

The funds will bring together leading researchers with a broad range of skills, clinical expertise and international networks to investigate high priority actions in tackling the disease, how to manage likely risks, and conduct economic evaluations of the most effective and innovative treatment options.

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“What’s particularly critical here is that this research draws in the ‘best of the best’; those with previous experience in leading international trials, the Australia-New Zealand Dialysis and Transplant Registry, and those with strong experience in medical guideline development,” said Dr Mathew.

A highlight of the new research is that it will build on, and benefit from, existing Kidney Health Australia initiatives – such as the KHA-CARI guidelines, ANZDATA, and the Australasian Kidney Trials network (AKTN) – and provide pilot funding for new research ideas and build a stronger workforce, all focused on tackling kidney disease in Australia, and abroad.

“As the national peak body that works to improve the lives of those living with kidney disease, and one that has itself provided \$30 million over the last 40 years to kidney research, we believe this research will make a big difference,” said Ms Wilson, “This announcement goes a long way to addressing the previously low levels of research funding and focus that kidney disease has historically received.”

“I would like to congratulate Professor Jonathan Craig, from the Children’s Hospital at Westmead and the University of Sydney, in securing this grant,” continued Ms Wilson, “In addition to this work, he is a Director on Kidney Health Australia’s Board, where he remains a tireless advocate for patients with kidney disease, and their families.”

“Professor Craig has brought together leading kidney researchers Professor David Johnson, Professor Jeremy Chapman, Associate Professor Stephen McDonald, and Associate Professor Carmel Hawley, to participate in this project.”

The project is unique in that it will be able to span the entire research translation pathway – from Australia’s world-class platforms in registries (ANZDATA), systematic reviews (Cochrane), trials (AKTN), as well as guidelines and implementation (KHA-CARI) – to maximise health outcomes.

"Kidney Health Australia would like to thank all of the Members of Parliament, the ANZSN, the Close The Gap Campaign Steering Committee, for their ongoing support and focus on these critical issues."

*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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