

MEDIA RELEASE

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**Kidney Health Australia welcomes extension of
Living Donors Support Scheme**

Kidney Health Australia applauds the Federal Government's announcement that it will continue the *Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors Program* for another four years.

The \$4.1 million dollar budget injection extension of the program will also see out-of-pocket expenses covered.

Kidney Health Australia CEO Mikaela Stafrace said, "Living donors give the ultimate gift by donating a kidney to save someone's life, so it is important they are supported to take time off of work for the surgery."

"We're also delighted by the news that, from 1 July this year, living donors will be reimbursed for eligible out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a result of organ donation. The Government has indicated this will be in addition to the time off work that is already provided for under the existing program."

The program, which began in 2013, helps alleviate the financial burden which is often experienced by living organ donors. It reimburses employers for an amount up to the national minimum wage, for up to nine weeks of leave taken by the living donor, as they undertake the necessary pre-transplant tests, undergo the procedure and recover.

Ms Stafrace said continuation of the program, which is administered by the Federal Health Department, was critical to see a rise in living donor rates.

"While rates of deceased organ donations have more than doubled in recent years – from 247 donors in 2009 to 503 in 2016 – the rates of living organ donation, mainly kidney donation, have declined by 19 per cent."

Ms Stafrace said it was a welcome relief for the over 1,000 chronic kidney disease patients currently on the transplant waiting list, and their families, who had been waiting to hear about the future of the program.

"Chronic kidney disease patients on the list are waiting up to seven years for a donor kidney. They have to undergo dialysis, five hours a day, three times a week in order to stay alive and the toll on their lives is enormous.

"We know deceased organ donations will never be able to keep up with demand for kidney transplants, which is why we need to support living donors. Last year 102 Australians accessed the program and became living donors, which helped to achieve 267 living kidney donations in total, which is 26 more people than in 2015.

“We also know that kidney transplants from living donors are associated with a 27% better survival rate for recipients over 20 years.

“Kidney Health Australia hopes to see this important program continued permanently,” Ms Stafrace said.

For more information about living kidney donations, 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'.

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