

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Kidney Health Australia Welcomes National Indigenous Taskforce

Kidney Health Australia warmly welcomes today's announcement by the Australian Labor Party indicating that if elected, it will convene a National Taskforce on kidney disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The announcement comes during Kidney Health Week 2016.

Kidney Health Australia has called for a National Taskforce to tackle the devastating rates of kidney disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities since launching its *'Kidney Health for All'* report in 2015.

"Establishing a "National Taskforce on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Kidney Health" will bring Australia's leading experts together to provide strategic advice on interventions across the spectrum of awareness, prevention, detection, education, treatment and transplantation."

In Australia, 1 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are living with markers of CKD¹. Alarming, 90% of these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have indicators of CKD are not aware they have the killer disease².

Anne Wilson CEO of Kidney Health Australia has indicated that "after taking age differences into account, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more than twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to have indicators of CKD and they are three times as likely as their non-Indigenous counterparts to have indicators of Stage 1 CKD and more than four times as likely to have Stages 4–5."

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

Ms Wilson said Kidney Health Australia was re-emphasising the need for national leadership on the critical issue of kidney disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including it as a priority in its recently announced election 'checklist for change'.

"Addressing these factors is complex and requires cross-portfolio government engagement and coordination. For those with kidney disease, accessibility to treatment options, including transplantation and regular dialysis sessions is poor compared to non-Indigenous Australians. The majority of affected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients in remote areas need to leave country for dialysis, which has massive cultural ramifications. Some people feel they have no option but to forgo treatments, so they can remain on country with their families," Ms. Wilson said.

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¹ ABS. Customised report. 2015.

² ABS. Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: Biomedical Results, 2012-13. 2014. Report No.: 4727.0.55.003, Canberra

“We urge all parties to support the establishment of a taskforce to provide a much needed national focus and leadership on the prevention and detection of CKD. Such a move would signal a clear commitment to addressing the current situation of indigenous peoples with an eye to ultimately closing the inequality gap where CKD is concerned.”

Kidney Health Australia, in putting forward this proposal, has committed to partnering with an incoming government to deliver this important health initiative for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

For more information on Kidney Health Week and to read the full ‘*Checklist for Change*’ 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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