

MEDIA RELEASE

May 26, 2016

**KIDNEY HEALTH AUSTRALIA WELCOMES ANNOUNCEMENT OF NSW
BIG RED KIDNEY BUS**

Thousands of Australians living on dialysis will soon be able to take a holiday in New South Wales, without missing life-saving treatments.

New South Wales Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, this morning announced the government's support of a partnership between national health care charity Kidney Health Australia and NSW Health to deliver a Big Red Kidney Bus program across the state.

The announcement coincides with Kidney Health Week (May 22-28) and secures the future of holiday dialysis in New South Wales.

Kidney Health Australia CEO, Anne Wilson, was thrilled to see funding for the bus officially announced and said it was a testament to the power of partnership, and what can be achieved by working closely with governments.

"This is a very proud day for all involved in making the vision for a New South Wales Big Red Kidney Bus a reality," said Ms Wilson, "Kidney Health Australia is thrilled to be able to expand our Big Red Kidney Bus program into New South Wales and offer patients from all around the country the opportunity to have a holiday here and still access dialysis treatment."

"This is the first step to making our Big Red Kidney Bus program a truly national program, which is tremendously exciting."

A world-first initiative, the Big Red Kidney Bus provides mobile holiday dialysis, travelling to popular holiday spots where it sets-up for six weeks at a time.

Currently, 1.7 million Australians are currently living with signs of kidney disease, however 90% of people don't know they have it. There are currently 9,619 Australians with kidney disease who are dependent on haemodialysis to keep them alive.

"It can be extremely difficult for those with end-stage kidney disease to take a holiday, due to the restrictions of their treatment," continued Ms Wilson, "Dialysis patients need to have treatment – either in hospital or at home – for up to five hours at a time, three days a week, and it can be difficult to book a holiday dialysis chair as availabilities are very limited around Australia."

Kidney Health Australia and Royal North Shore Hospital will be developing the NSW Big Red Kidney Bus Project in Community Partnership, and NSW Haemodialysis patients will be consulted on the holiday locations the Big Red Kidney Bus will visit.

Kidney Health Australia will work with the NSW Bus Industry to have a suitable coach donated and will fund the refurbishment of the bus into a state-of-the art holiday dialysis unit. It is hoped that the NSW Big Red Kidney Bus will be on the road before 2017.

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“On behalf of Kidney Health Australia, I sincerely thank the New South Wales Government for supporting the Big Red Kidney Bus, and committing to the ongoing funding of this innovative program and support for holiday dialysis across the state.”

The concept for the Big Red Kidney Bus came from the late Mr Vince Tripodi, a dialysis patient who wrote to Kidney Health Australia about his idea for a mobile dialysis unit in 2011.

For more information, or to donate to the Big Red Kidney Bus, visit www.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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Note to Editors: About the Big Red Kidney Bus

- The Big Red Kidney Bus is a mobile dialysis unit and was awarded the 2015 National Disability Award for Excellence in Community Accessibility, and also won the Gold Award for Innovative Models of Care at the 2015 Victorian Public Health Care Awards.
- Since launching in Victoria in October 2014, the Big Red Kidney Bus program has received 421 bookings for patients to receive dialysis while on holiday with their families which, for some patients was the first holiday they had been on in their life
- The Big Red Kidney Bus is open to all Australians on hospital, satellite or home dialysis. Patients arrange their own holiday accommodation and travel.
- Bookings can be made online at kidney.org.au, or by emailing bigredkidneybus@kidney.org.au or contacting free call 1800 454 363
- Kidney Health Australia owns the bus, manages the bookings and employs the bus driver
- Admission criteria must be met and a *What to bring on board checklist* followed.

For more information or to arrange an interview, contact:

Cassandra Bradshaw

National Media and Communications Manager

Kidney Health Australia

T (03) 9674 4313 M 0402 346 197

cassandra.bradshaw@kidney.org.au