Media Release
July 31, 2015

Funding Boost For Renal In Central Australia Welcomed

Kidney Health Australia welcomes the announcements by Federal Assistant Minister Fiona Nash and Northern Territory Housing Minister Bess Price which significantly increases funding for Central Australia’s renal infrastructure and services to the tune of $25.3 million over 3 years.

Anne Wilson, CEO Kidney Health Australia, congratulated the Government on addressing this critical health issue affecting Indigenous communities.

“Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory experience a shockingly high rate of end stage kidney disease (ESKD), and many have to relocate to access life-saving haemodialysis treatment,” said Ms Wilson, “This announcement will greatly assist patients and their families to stay together.”

The first announcement was $10 million in renal infrastructure to the Northern Territory Government for the development of accommodation in Tennant Creek and Alice Springs for end stage kidney patients and their family who need to relocate to access treatment, as well as the development of new renal clinics in Kaltukatjara (Docker River), Papunya and an upgrade of the clinic at Mt Leibig.

In addition, Assistant Minister for Health, Fiona Nash, announced funding of $9 million over three years to Western Desert Dialysis to continue delivery of dialysis services and a range of renal support activities in Alice Springs and remote communities in Central Australia.

A further $6.3 million was being committed to Western Desert Dialysis for the development of additional renal infrastructure in remote communities to assist renal patients to remain in these communities.

The Purple House is the only Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation providing dedicated holistic care for Aboriginal people with end stage renal failure in the Central Australia region.

Kidney disease is a critical health issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, affecting an alarming 18% of the adult Indigenous population. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with treated ESKD are known to have earlier onset, experience a multiplicity of barriers to receiving equitable treatment, and have a worse prognosis.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote Central Australia experience end stage kidney disease at a rate 18 to 20 times higher than that of the wider Australian population. Also, they are on average at least 20 years younger than in other areas. Most recent data from the Australian and New Zealand Dialysis and Transplant Registry shows that in 2013 there were 589 people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin on dialysis or living with a kidney transplant in the Northern Territory.

Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders represent less than 2.5% of the national population, they account for more than 1 in 10 people commencing dialysis each year.

-continues-
“For Aboriginal people in remote areas, such as Central Australia, lack of access to haemodialysis services closer to home and the need to relocate are key determinants to uptake of renal replacement therapy and adherence to treatment regimens,” said Professor Alan Cass, Kidney Health Australia’s Medical Advisor, and President of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology.

“Models of haemodialysis service delivery, such as The Purple House, and in-community centres have provided real positive benefits for patients, their families and their communities.”

“This is a serious and growing health issue in Indigenous communities, so it is pleasing to see that the recommendations from the Central Australia Renal Study to develop realistic clinical service delivery models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dialysis patients have been heard and crucial funds allocated to these models,” added Professor Cass.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kidney health is a priority for Kidney Health Australia and we look forward to working with Sarah Brown and the Purple House to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their families, and communities,” said Ms Wilson.

*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.*

*ENDS*

*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