

MEDIA RELEASE
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US Dancing with the Stars' Sharna Burgess shines a light on kidney disease

Dancing with the Stars USA choreographer and professional dancer, Sharna Burgess, has been appointed a global ambassador for Kidney Health Australia, it was announced today.

Sharna, a regular on *Dancing with the Stars USA*, was paired with Nick Carter from iconic music group, The Backstreet Boys in Season 21. Nick and Sharna finished in second place and Sharna is currently touring the United States with *Dancing With The Stars Live*.

Raised in Wagga Wagga, Sharna performed in the 2000 Olympic Games closing ceremony, before appearing in musical productions across the world, including *Strictly Ballroom* in London and *Burn the Floor* on Broadway.

Sharna said she is honoured to become an Ambassador for Kidney Health Australia, as she has a very personal connection to kidney disease.

"I am passionate about raising awareness of kidney disease, which affects a staggering 1.7 million Australians. Both my Dad and Nanna are on dialysis because their kidneys have failed, and I have seen the significant impact kidney disease has had on their quality of life and the toll it has taken on my family," said Sharna, "It is a more complicated, life-changing situation than we could have ever imagined – I wish so much that they could be here in the US to watch me perform, but they are unable to travel due to dialysis.

"When I got the phone call that my dad's kidney function was down below 15% my heart fell to my feet. Somehow we think the people we love are invincible until the very moment they are not."

"With a family history of kidney disease, I know I am at increased risk. Early detection can save lives and I encourage all Australians to visit Kidney Health Australia's new website, kidney.org.au, to find out more about this chronic health issue."

Kidney Health Australia CEO and Managing Director, Anne Wilson, said she is thrilled to welcome Sharna on board.

"Sharna's incredible profile, energy and passion will help to continue to raise awareness of kidney disease across the country," said Ms Wilson, "Generating a national discussion around early detection is vital, as 90 per cent of kidney function can be lost without experiencing any symptoms."



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“One in three Australians are at increased risk of developing kidney disease, however, if detected early and managed appropriately, the deterioration in kidney function can be reduced by as much as 50 per cent and may even be reversible,” added Ms Wilson.

Sharna joins Kidney Health Australia’s growing team of Patrons and Ambassadors, including actor Frankie J. Holden, Australian cricketer David Hussey, X-Factor contestant Rochelle Pitt, pop music legend Normie Rowe AM, Lady Margaret Brabham and Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove.

Visit kidney.org.au or freecall 1800 454 363 to find out more.

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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