

MEDIA RELEASE
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Big Red Kidney Bus pulls up in Coffs Harbour

A game-changing mobile dialysis bus which allows kidney patients to go on holiday, or enjoy a change of scene, has set up in Coffs Harbour for five weeks.

The NSW Big Red Kidney Bus is a state-of-the-art mobile dialysis unit fitted with three chairs capable of providing up to 1,500 treatments a year when at full capacity.

The charity Kidney Health Australia owns and operates the bus, and Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney, provides the medical staff and dialysis service.

From August 21 to September 30, the bus will be conveniently located at Park Beach Holiday Park, offering families and individuals from around Australia the opportunity to have what is possibly their first holiday since starting dialysis treatment.

Kidney Health Australia has also operated a bus in Victoria since 2014 and the charity's CEO Mikaela Stafrace said she was thrilled the bus program was now in NSW.

"Dialysis is a debilitating and restrictive regime, and it can be extremely difficult for those with end-stage kidney disease to take a holiday," she said.

"On average, dialysis patients need to have treatment for up to five hours at a time, three days a week, and holiday dialysis chair availabilities are very limited around Australia."

Ms Stafrace said dialysis on the kidney bus was also available for locals who might want to try out the service in Coffs Harbour with a view to including it in their own future travel plans.

One of those taking advantage of the opportunity to undergo dialysis at Coffs Harbour, and take a holiday at the same time, is retired bricklayer and machinist, 68-year-old Neville Lott from Newcastle.

"It's great," he said. "I've been here for two weeks, and today is my last treatment at Coffs Harbour. When I heard the bus was heading up to Ballina next month, I booked for another two weeks up there."

Neville travelled to Coffs Harbour with his wife Rosyln and they brought their own caravan and are camping at Park Beach Holiday Park. They have used the opportunity to catch up with family, go sight-seeing and to play bowls.

Kidney Health Australia gratefully acknowledges the Lions Club which has committed to raise \$200,000 by 2019 to underwrite the costs of a new Big Red Kidney Bus for NSW. The Lions Club of Toronto is leading the fundraising effort. To support the Lions fundraising, go to <https://sites.google.com/site/lions201n3/activities/bigredkidneybus> to make a donation or buy tickets for a major raffle prize.

Kidney Health Australia is urging people and families living with kidney disease to book dialysis, a familiarisation visit, or request more information on the bus as soon as possible. Phone 1800 454 363 or email bigredkidneybus@kidney.org.au

Kidney Health Australia 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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