

**MEDIA RELEASE****For immediate release****Tuesday, 25 January 2022**

## **New program gives a career boost to young people with kidney disease**

A new internship developed and jointly funded by Kidney Health Australia and the Becky Johns Trust aims to give young people with kidney disease a head start in their career.

The Becky Johns Internship Program is named after Sue and Paul Johns' daughter Becky who passed away from kidney disease in 2015, but who was able to work for Kidney Health Australia as a young adult in a job she loved.

"The time when Becky worked with Kidney Health Australia was some of her happiest years," Mrs Johns said. 'She felt needed and part of a team and felt like she was contributing to something important."

"We wanted to be able to give other young people with kidney disease the same joy and satisfaction that Becky got from being part of a workplace and not being defined by her disease," Mrs Johns said.

Kidney Health Australia CEO, Chris Forbes said Kidney Health Australia was thrilled to be part of an initiative that could help young people with kidney disease get started in their career, and thanked Sue and Paul for helping to make the program a reality.

"Sue and Paul have always been fantastic supporters and their determination to support other young people has always been an inspiration to our team," Mr Forbes said.

"We are very proud to launch this program with them and equip young people with kidney disease with the skills and experience to take forth into the world as independent adults.

Mr Forbes said young people with kidney disease and kidney-related conditions faced a myriad of challenges in managing their disease and the interruptions that treatment placed on their progress through their academic and social life.

"On top of navigating the normal pressures of adolescence, these kids and young people are also grappling with a life-threatening and debilitating disease," Mr Forbes said.

Mr Forbes said Kidney Health Australia was thrilled to welcome their first intern to the program, who will be working with the team until the end of 2022.

"Kellie is a remarkable young person who was diagnosed with lupus nephritis as a 15 year old, and spent a number of critical years trying to manage her condition and health, while going through her final challenging years of high school.

"Kellie has shown courage and resilience in getting on top of her condition while completing a Bachelor's degree in Human Nutrition degree and working towards a Masters in Dietetics at Swinburne University and is now keen to look at a career in dietetics, and contribute to the kidney community through the role."

Kidney Health Australia CEO, Chris Forbes said the initiative was part of Kidney Health Australia's Kids and Youth Program, which aims to help young people with kidney disease get the support and resources they need to transition into adulthood.

For more information on the Becky Johns Internship or any of Kidney Health Australia's programs and services, visit [www.kidney.org.au](http://www.kidney.org.au) or email [careteam@kidney.org.au](mailto:careteam@kidney.org.au).

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### **Interviews**

Chris Forbes, CEO, Kidney Health Australia  
Sue and Paul Johns, Becky Johns Trust

### **About Kidney Health Australia**

Kidney Health Australia is a not-for-profit and the peak body for kidney health in Australia with the aim to protect 5 million at risk Australians from developing end stage kidney disease, and to save and improve the lives of people already affected by the disease through support services and funding crucial research. To find out more visit [www.kidney.org.au](http://www.kidney.org.au)

### **Kidney Health Facts**

- Kidneys are essential to a person's health and wellbeing. They rid your body of waste (through urine), clean your blood of waste and toxins, regulate your blood pressure and manage the production of Vitamin D – essential to strong bones, muscles and overall health!
- Currently over 730 young people between 0-24 years of age in Australia live with end stage kidney disease (or kidney failure). Of those, 25% are on dialysis and 75% live with a kidney transplant.
- Over 30% of young kidney transplant recipients lose their transplant within 36 months after transferring to adult services,
- Kidney-related disease kills more people than breast cancer, prostate cancer and road accidents
- Figures released by the Bureau of Statistics late last year revealed that about 63 people are dying with kidney-related disease every day
- Kidney disease sufferers can lose 90% of kidney function without experiencing any symptoms
- One in three people living in Australia is at risk of developing chronic kidney disease
- Of the staggering 1.7 million people affected by kidney disease, 1.5 million are not aware they have it
- One in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have indicators of chronic kidney disease and are four times more likely to die from it than the non-Indigenous population
- Kidney-related disease is estimated to cost the Australian economy \$4.1 billion a year



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