

KIDNEY CODE RED: THE RESPONSE

A mandate for urgent action
to end the kidney crisis.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kidney Health Australia is the leading voice on kidney disease in Australia, with the bold aspiration to **End Dialysis by 2050**. We drive awareness, advocate for change, encourage early detection, and deliver vital support programs and services for those impacted by the disease. We work collaboratively with the clinical and research community to improve treatment, innovation, and research. Together, we are rewriting the narrative of kidney disease.

End Dialysis
by 2050



Note: Please see full report for Reference list.

Kidney disease has a devastating impact on individuals, families and communities across Australia. It doesn't have to be this way...

If you get an early CKD diagnosis, then you can manage it extremely well and live a normal life.

53-year-old Shailendra Tripathi stumbled across a kidney failure diagnosis during a general checkup for his executive team at work. He lived a healthy lifestyle as a non-drinker and a non-smoker. Even so, Shailendra was told in 2008 that he had high blood pressure; however, no doctor could tell him why. Fast-forward to 2015 when a mandatory workplace annual health check was conducted, and it all started to make sense. Shailendra's kidney function was at 52%, something he was completely oblivious to and something that had not been explored by doctors aware of his high blood pressure, despite being a major risk factor of kidney failure. Shailendra has a curiosity for research and how things work, so he has since taken it upon himself to adapt his lifestyle to prolong his quality of life, seeking out the most up-to-date medications, adjusting his diet and physical activity to ensure he is at optimal health and able to delay having dialysis.

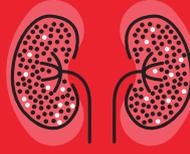
Shailendra Tripathi, patient advocate

THE COLD, HARD, REALITY OF KIDNEY DISEASE



CKD is common.

1 in 7 Australians are affected by kidney disease.¹



A hidden national problem.

2.5M Australians are unaware they have signs of kidney disease.¹



People do not know they have kidney disease.

You can lose **90%** of kidney function without symptoms.¹⁰

Kidney disease is under-detected in Australia.

Only **23%** of people at known risk of CKD have had a **Kidney Health Check** in the last two years.¹¹



A silent killer.

50% of people with kidney disease die prematurely of a heart attack or stroke.¹²



It is time for change.

Treatment for CKD can slow disease progression by **15 years** or more.^{13,14}

A growing threat.

1 million more Australians are affected by CKD than a decade ago.¹



If we do nothing...

CKD will be the **5th** leading cause of death globally by 2050.⁹

A kidney health emergency.

Incidence of kidney failure will grow by **42%** by 2030.⁵



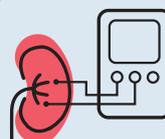
Kidney services are overwhelmed.

Dialysis units across the country have more patients than they can treat.^{7,8} Kidney doctors are having to ration treatment, **limiting access** to life-sustaining treatment.^{7,8}

Major impact on Australian families.

Australians with kidney failure are on 'life-support' three days a week, five hours at a time.

Indefinitely.



Detecting kidney disease early saves money.

Every **\$1** invested in early intervention, **saves \$45** in health care costs.⁵



United, we can end the kidney crisis. To succeed, we must act now.

The kidney crisis in Australia is an escalating public health emergency which cannot be ignored.

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) affects 1 in 7 Australian adults, yet is significantly under-diagnosed and under-treated.¹ 2.5 million Australians are currently unaware they are living with CKD. This puts them at high risk of heart attack and stroke and denies them the opportunity to receive life-saving treatment.^{1,2}

We must shift our focus from kidney failure to kidney preservation. Kidney failure has a devastating impact on both individuals and families. More than 85% of dialysis patients experience financial hardship and 50% experience depression.^{3,4} The number of Australians requiring treatment for kidney failure has doubled in the last 20 years and is projected to grow by an additional 42% by 2030.^{5,6}

Australian health services are struggling to meet existing demand and dialysis services across the country are at capacity.^{7,8} Healthcare teams are needing to rationalise life-sustaining treatment, potentially compromising patient outcomes.^{7,8} If we do nothing, CKD will become the 5th leading cause of death globally by 2050.⁹

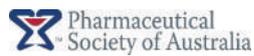
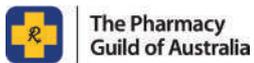
Early diagnosis and proactive treatment offer the best chance to beat CKD. The tests for CKD are simple, cheap, and readily available. Medications to stop CKD progression to kidney failure are now available and listed on the PBS.

For every \$1 we invest in early intervention, we can save \$45 in direct health care costs, avoid hospitalisations and improve the lives of people living with CKD.⁵

In response to the crisis in Kidney Health, we are calling on Australian Governments, Australian commercial organisations and industry partners, health bodies, healthcare professionals, and the Australian community to take urgent action on kidney disease through:

1. Increased **awareness** of kidney disease, its **risk factors**, the **burden** on individuals and health systems amongst the Australian public and healthcare communities.
2. **Investment in targeted early detection of CKD** in those at known risk. Enabling early diagnosis and treatment to stop kidney disease in its tracks.
3. **Early (and equitable) access to life changing treatments** and programs for every person diagnosed with CKD, to stop kidney disease in its tracks and help individuals avoid a life spent on dialysis.
4. A **cohesive chronic disease approach**, given that CKD, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease share common causes, risk factors, and have similar treatment strategies.
5. **Full national implementation of the World Health Assembly resolution on kidney health**, recognition of CKD as a major global health issue and integration of kidney care into national health strategies.

Progress will require strong leadership to fundamentally change the course of kidney disease for all Australians. Australia can no longer afford to ignore this crisis when a long-term solution is ready and waiting. Together, we must create change now.



**There has never been
greater imperative
to address this
national emergency.**



A MANDATE FOR URGENT ACTION TO END THE KIDNEY CRISIS SNAPSHOT

The problem: 2.5 million Australians are living with signs of kidney disease but do not know they have it.

If not diagnosed and treated in time, people crash-land into kidney failure, requiring gruelling and expensive dialysis or kidney transplantation.

The goal: To confront the kidney crisis head-on through early detection and decisive treatment of CKD, the frontline strategy in our mission to **End Dialysis by 2050**.

Urgent action is needed across three pillars:

Recommendation 1. Increase awareness of kidney disease

1.1 Increase awareness of CKD in Australian community with a focus on three key messages:

- What kidneys do.
- What is CKD and why should you care?
- Who is at risk of CKD and what action to take?

1.2 Increase awareness of CKD detection and management in the health professional community highlighting:

- Burden of kidney disease and the opportunity to act.
- Proactively look for CKD, identify who is at risk, test for CKD using the Kidney Health Check.
- Do not miss the urine test (uACR).

Note: See Appendix A for a description on what constitutes early detection and management of CKD in Australia.

Recommendation 2. Detect kidney disease earlier

2.1 Make the existing tests and systems for CKD detection as easy as possible.

- Enhance and leverage pathology reporting through a bundled Kidney Health Check and tailored messaging for those at risk.
- Implement specific funding / incentives for healthcare professionals to undertake targeted Kidney Health Checks, ensuring the uACR is not missed. e.g. via Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS).
- Fund national primary care-based programs to target CKD testing to those at greatest risk – e.g. people with diabetes and hypertension.

2.2 Establish new and innovative ways to detect and diagnose CKD as early as possible.

- Use full scope of practice for nurses, and pharmacists to support early detection of CKD.
- Harness point of care testing for opportunistic detection of CKD.
- Use technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and software prompts to reduce provider burden through automated identification of patients at risk, and those requiring testing, follow up and management review.

Recommendation 3. Improve outcomes in kidney disease management

3.1 Address the gap between guideline recommended care and real-world practice to improve outcomes for patients with CKD.

- Increase knowledge and implementation of guideline directed CKD care amongst healthcare professionals, with a focus on uACR testing and uptake of medications to slow progression of CKD.
- Ensure that people eligible for CKD medicines receive them early enough to improve outcomes.
- Establish effective linkage between primary and tertiary CKD care to ensure continuity of care for people living with CKD.

3.2 Ensure equitable and culturally safe care and treatment for all people with CKD regardless of their background or where they live.

- Initiatives for First Nations people must be based on principles of self-determination and cultural safety; designed, guided and supported by communities, and implemented by an appropriate workforce.

3.3 Support people living with CKD to be active partners in their healthcare.

- Linkage with targeted education programs such as Kidney Health Australia's Kidney Health 4 Life program.
- Provide culturally safe and co-designed education programs for First Nations Peoples and culturally diverse communities impacted by CKD.

3.4 Foster stronger collaboration and care across the diabetes, kidney, cardiovascular sector to enhance person centred outcomes.

Download the full report
Kidney Code Red: The Response
A mandate for urgent action to end the kidney crisis
at kidney.org.au/theresponse

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