

**MEDIA RELEASE****STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 9am, 7 May 2017****Kidney Health Australia welcomes Medicare Review Taskforce's  
recommendation for 'on country' dialysis**

Kidney Health Australia welcomes the recommendations contained in the Medicare Benefit Schedule Review. Of particular significance is the recommendation to provide an MBS item to support 'on country' dialysis for Australians living with kidney disease in remote areas. Kidney Health Australia CEO Mikaela Stafrace congratulated Professor Alan Cass, the Chair of the Renal Clinical Committee and his team for the recommendations that focus on ensuring access to quality care on country.

This recommendation would ensure that dialysis services can be funded for delivery in very remote areas. By funding a dedicated MBS item number, nurses, Aboriginal health workers and practitioners, can deliver dialysis to end-stage kidney disease patients 'on country'.

Kidney Health Australia CEO Mikaela Stafrace said the impact of kidney disease in Indigenous communities is overwhelming and needs to be the subject of national consultation.

"Many chronic kidney disease patients are required to move to town centres, often located hundreds of kilometres away from family, country and community. They do this in order to access to life-saving dialysis. The patients need housing, carers, transport and income.

"This recommendation, if taken up by the Federal Government, will significantly address the need to relocate and will address the massive social impact on Indigenous kidney patients and their families.

Ms Stafrace said Kidney Health Australia is committed to assisting those living with kidney disease and their families to access best practice health care and psycho-social supports. This is of particular importance in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities where the rates of kidney disease are higher than any other community in Australia and are increasing:

- In remote and very remote areas of Australia, the incidence of end stage kidney disease for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is especially high, rates are up to 20 times higher than amongst non-Indigenous Australians.
- Approximately 80% of the mortality gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 35 to 74 years is due to chronic disease and the heaviest disease burden impacts on people living in very remote (36.7%) and remote (27.6%) regions.
- 78% of patients in remote areas with end-stage kidney disease have to relocate, compared with 39% of those who live in rural areas and 15% of urban Indigenous ESKD patients.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians represent approximately 3% of the national population, yet account for approximately 9% of people commencing kidney replacement treatment each year.
- Amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, the heaviest disease burden impacts on people living in very remote (36.7%) and remote (27.6%) regions.

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Ms Stafrace said Kidney Health Australia will continue to represent the voice of people living with kidney disease and their families and advocate for system improvements that make their disease journey easier.

*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'.*

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**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

[cassandra.bradshaw@kidney.org.au](mailto:cassandra.bradshaw@kidney.org.au)

Antonia Liosatos

*Media Advisor*

Kidney Health Australia

**M** 0458 000 955

[tonia.liosatos@kidney.org.au](mailto:tonia.liosatos@kidney.org.au)