

# 1 in 3

One in three Australians is at increased risk of developing kidney disease<sup>3</sup>

## Why does kidney disease need increased focus?

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) occurs when a patient suffers from gradual and usually permanent loss of kidney function over a period of months to years. End-Stage Kidney Disease (ESKD) occurs when the kidneys are no longer able to function at

a level needed for day-to-day life, usually when CKD has worsened to the point at which kidney function is less than 10% of normal.<sup>1</sup> The most common causes of ESKD in Australia are diabetes, nephritis (inflammation of the kidney) and high blood

pressure and patients who have reached this stage need dialysis or a kidney transplant.<sup>1</sup> In 2020, almost 31,000 Australians may need treatment for ESKD and the cost of treating all current and new cases of ESKD is estimated at \$12 billion.<sup>2</sup>

# IMPROVING THE LIVES OF AUSTRALIANS WITH KIDNEY DISEASE

Kidney Health Australia has released a new report in conjunction with the George Institute for Global Health, *The Economic Impact of End-Stage Kidney Disease in Australia: Projections to 2020*, which highlights the current and future impact of the condition on Australia's health system.

Over 50 Australians die every day from kidney-related disease<sup>4</sup>

## How many Australians are affected?

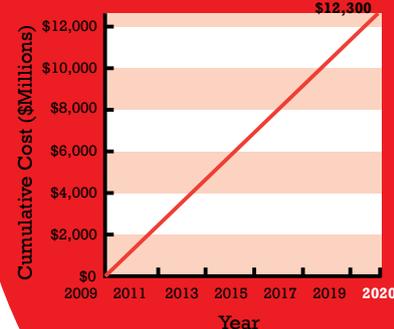
One in three Australians over the age of 25 is at risk of developing kidney disease yet, because it has no warning signs, a person can lose up to 90% of their kidney function before they realise they are sick.<sup>3</sup> The report shows the total number of patients receiving treatment for ESKD in Australia could reach between 27,013 and 30,293 by 2020; an increase of more than 54% from 2008.<sup>2</sup>

Yet only 6% of dialysis patients currently receive a kidney transplant each year, due to a lack of donor organs and recipient suitability. Patients spend approximately four to seven years on dialysis waiting for a kidney transplant.<sup>2</sup> The incidence of ESKD is growing in Australia at a serious rate and current services may not be able to meet this increasing demand.

## So what does kidney disease cost the economy?

- ESKD is costly for patients, their families and the taxpayer. Patients with ESKD require dialysis or kidney transplantation, which are highly costly and consume a sizeable portion of the health budget.
- In 2010, the cost to the Australian Government of providing dialysis and kidney transplant services was almost \$1 billion.<sup>2</sup>
- The cumulative cost to the Australian Government of treating all current and

- new cases of ESKD from 2009 to 2020 is estimated at around \$12 billion.<sup>2</sup>
- However, this does not take into account the impact – both financial and personal – on patients and their families. An ESKD patient's capacity to earn an income is hampered by their condition yet there are many personal costs, in relation to both time and quality of life, associated with undergoing dialysis.



Projected treatment costs for all new & existing kidney patients<sup>2</sup>

Only 6% of patients on dialysis receive a kidney transplant each year<sup>2</sup>

# 6%

## What are the implications for the management of kidney disease?

The report's findings have prompted Kidney Health Australia to call for improved access to home-based dialysis and increased kidney organ donation, which will result in improvements in patients' quality of life

as well as significant savings for the health system at large. The annual cost of dialysis per patient per year is: \$79,072 Hospital, \$65,315 Satellite, \$49,137 Home, \$53,112 Peritoneal.

## Recommendations

**1. Access to home-based dialysis needs to be increased and its roll-out facilitated and sustained across all States and Territories**

Increasing the use of home-based dialysis would lead to estimated net savings of between \$378 and \$430 million.<sup>2</sup> More patients need to be provided with access to home-based dialysis in order to lessen the burden on the hospital health system, and service provision needs to be facilitated and sustained across all States and Territories to ensure equal access for all people with ESKD in Australia. ▶

**2. We need to adopt more cost-efficient dialysis provision to improve survival and quality of life of Australians with kidney disease**

There has been little expansion of home-based dialysis services since 2005, largely due to limited resources and facilities for home-based dialysis training. Kidney Health Australia is calling for a move towards more cost efficient models of dialysis that will help improve the lives of patients and ease pressure and costs on the health system. ▶

**3. Performing more kidney transplants would be less expensive and more cost effective than current practice**

Increasing the availability of donor organs represents excellent value for money. Even after factoring the additional costs associated with increased organ donation, increasing the rate of kidney transplantation by 50% – to match current rates in the U.S. and Europe – would achieve cost savings and greater health benefits for patients.<sup>2</sup> ▶

# \$12b

The cost of treating all current and new cases of ESKD to 2020 is estimated at \$12 billion<sup>2</sup>



“By 2020, we will have 30,000 Australians requiring dialysis or a kidney transplant to stay alive. We should develop strategies to overcome the financial and structural barriers affecting the ability to shift dialysis treatment from the hospital sector to the community sector, to reduce health expenditure and mitigate the impact of severe kidney disease on patients and their families.”

Professor Alan Cass,  
Senior Director at the George  
Institute for Global Health

“Significant opportunities exist to reduce the impact associated with ESKD. By increasing the number of kidneys available for transplantation we can save lives, reduce costs associated with dialysis in all forms and improve health outcomes for Australians. Australia needs to aim for a rate of organ donation that is equal to the proven leading performance of other countries for whom the wait for a transplant is nowhere near what it is in Australia.”

Anne Wilson,  
CEO of Kidney  
Health Australia



To read the full version of the report, or to find out more, visit [www.kidney.org.au](http://www.kidney.org.au)

The report, *The Economic Impact of End-Stage Kidney Disease in Australia*, was commissioned by Kidney Health Australia and conducted by the George Institute for Global Health. It was funded by an unrestricted educational grant from Roche Australia.

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1. Medline Plus, U.S. National Library of Medicine. End-stage kidney disease. Available at: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000500.htm> [Accessed October 2010].
2. Cass A *et al.* The Economic Impact of End-Stage Kidney Disease in Australia: Projections to 2020. 2010. Kidney Health Australia.
3. Kidney Health Australia. Fast Facts on CKD in Australia. Available at: <http://www.kidney.org.au/KidneyDisease/FastFactsonCKDinAustralia/tabid/589/Default.aspx> [Accessed October 2010].
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, Causes of Death, 2008, ABS cat no. 3303.0, Canberra: ABS, p. 44.

Almost 31,000  
Australians  
may need  
treatment for  
ESKD by 2020<sup>2</sup>

# 31k