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Minister for Health and Ageing

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MEDIA RELEASE

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KIDNEY DISEASE – AUSTRALIA’S ‘SILENT KILLER’

The number of Australians becoming sick and dying from kidney failure is rising rapidly, largely due to avoidable lifestyle factors such as high blood pressure.

In 2007, diseases of the kidney and urinary tract jumped into the top 10 leading causes of death among Australians, with 3,230 deaths.

Many of these deaths could have been prevented. Risk factors for chronic kidney disease include diabetes and high blood pressure. Other contributing factors may include tobacco smoking and physical inactivity.

Kidney Health Week, which is now underway, is an opportunity for Australians to learn more about the dangers of kidney disease and how to avoid it.

This year, the week focuses on the link between high blood pressure and chronic kidney disease.

High blood pressure is not only a possible sign of kidney disease - it can cause kidney disease.

Changing lifestyle with healthy eating, exercise and stopping smoking are simple steps everyone can take to improve health and protect their kidneys.

The Government has funded a number of initiatives to reduce the incidence and spread of kidney disease. Measures include:

- More than \$16 million for 107 grants into kidney disease research via the National Health and Medical Research Council;
- \$7 million for the construction of a renal dialysis unit at the North Lakes Health Precinct in Queensland;
- More than \$8 million to improve access to dialysis services in the Kimberley region of WA;

- More than \$5 million to improve access to dialysis services for remote communities in the Northern Territory; and
- More than \$1 million for the Chronic Kidney Disease Monitoring Centre.

Funding has also been invested through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme to help people with chronic kidney disease. In 2007-08 expenditure on drugs for chronic kidney disease was more than \$30 million.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220.