STEP TOWARDS BETTER RENAL HEALTH

The Northern Territory will be one of the major beneficiaries of the Australian Health Ministers’ decision to support the development of strategies to combat renal disease.

NT Minister for Health Dr Peter Toyne who is the chair of the Australian Health Ministers’ Conference delivered a paper - Remote Area Renal Services for Indigenous Australians – which was endorsed by his State, Territory and New Zealand counterparts.

Strategies will now be developed which will have a practical focus as well as address broad issues and include:

- listing of principles that should underpin the development of remote area renal services
- the delivery of highly skilled specialist renal health workforce and a highly skilled primary health care workforce
- the development of service standards and the recognition of their role in the cycle of quality improvement
- the acknowledgement of transplantation as the preferred renal replacement therapy
- involvement of indigenous people in the planning and implementation of services
- attention to patient education and support
- consideration of renal service requirements in health infrastructure development

Health Ministers agreed today that national consultation would take place over the next 12 months to confirm the relevance and appropriateness of these strategies.

They reinforce the work being done in the Northern Territory to rollout renal services which has included:

- opening of a self-care renal dialysis training centre in Alice Springs
- opening of renal ward in Alice Springs Hospital
- opening of a dialysis unit at Palmerston
- the construction of a renal unit at Tennant Creek
- $610,000 towards the self-treatment dialysis facility in Kintore and,
- the relocation of dialysis machines from Darwin to Groote and Elcho Islands;

Dr Toyne also delivered an outline for what needs to be done to give kids a good start to life.

His paper Child Health and Wellbeing built upon the Northern Territory Government’s Building Healthier Communities – the NT Government’s framework to provide the best possible health care for all Territorians.
The options he put forward include:

- maternal health in pregnancy and before birth
- service arrangements to enhance child health and wellbeing
- workforce strategies addressing the needs of professionals working with children
- monitoring child development, health and wellbeing

Strategies on Child Health and Wellbeing will be considered at the next Australian Health Ministers Conference in Adelaide in April.

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