Health Minister Dr Peter Toyne today joined people in the Western Desert region of the Northern Territory in celebrating a major achievement in improving the health and lives of renal patients.

Dr Toyne was in Kintore (Walungurru) for the opening of the dialysis room at the Pintubi Homelands Health Service.

“The dialysis room is the other side of the story to the training house that was opened in Alice Springs in September,” he said.

“With the town house training Yanangu from the Western Desert in self-care dialysis, patients are now able to return to their homes in Kintore where supported dialysis is available at the clinic.

“This program is a milestone and the happiness of the patients who have been able to return to families and country is wonderful to see.”

Dr Toyne paid tribute to the members of the Friends of the Western Desert Dialysis Group, a coalition of national art collectors, dealers and local community representatives, who raised the initial funds to enable this initiative to get off the ground.

“The group formed the Western Desert Dialysis Appeal and more than $1 million was raised at a Sotheby’s auction in late 2000 to support the dialysis program,” he said.

“It was terrific to see so many of those original supporters make it to Kintore today for the opening of the dialysis room.”

Dr Toyne congratulated the committee and members of the Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku (Making Our Families Well) Aboriginal Corporation on their hard work in making
this treatment option a reality.

“The Corporation has worked tirelessly to set up this safe, appropriate service that will see many Yanangu families re-united,” he said.

“The Department of Health and Community Services is supporting the program with funding of $160,000 for establishment and running costs and is also providing some dialysis equipment.

“But the opening of the Alice Springs house and the Kintore facility is just the beginning.

“Much of the WDNWPT’s work is supported by donations and I’d urge people to get behind the work of this group that is already making a big difference to the lives and health of people in the Western Desert.”

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