

Media statement

12 March 2019

Kidney Health for Everyone, Everywhere

This year, **World Kidney Day (March 14)** is themed '**Kidney Health: for everyone, everywhere**' and sets out to raise awareness of the increasing burden of kidney disease worldwide and the need for strategies for accessible kidney disease prevention and management.

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) is striving to increase access for patients across the Sunshine Coast and Gympie regions, by offering Telehealth video consultations with Renal Specialists.

Tin Can Bay resident Bill Frost had a kidney transplant 10 years ago, after being diagnosed with cancer of the kidneys, and spending two and a half years on kidney dialysis.

The 62-year-old requires a check-up appointment with SCHHS Director of Renal Services Associate Professor Nick Gray every three months. It was a three-hour round trip for Bill to make each appointment at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital, which prompted A/Prof Gray to assess and connect Mr Frost with Telehealth.

Telehealth allows patients who live in rural or remote areas to have access to a specialist through a video consultation under Medicare. This provides many patients with easier access to specialists, and without the time and expense involved in travelling to large hospitals.

"The Telehealth appointments have made a big difference for me, now instead of having to drive an hour and a half each way, I make the short trip to Gympie Hospital instead, and have a video consultation with Dr Gray," Mr Frost said.

"At first it was a bit different seeing the doctor through the video link, but you get used to it very quickly. Now I just walk into the specialist unit of Gympie Hospital and press the on button for the video link."

"It's made it easier for me to keep up with my appointments and make sure my health is on track, and my levels are all still great," Mr Frost said.

A/Prof Gray said telehealth allowed greater access to healthcare for patients.

"It means participants can strap on their own blood pressure monitor and we can check levels remotely, rather than making the trip to the hospital," A/Prof Gray said.

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“Kidney disease affects about 10 per cent of adults, yet remains under recognised and poorly understood by many in the community, and the symptoms of kidney disease can be hard to recognise,” he said.

“People aged over 60 years are most at risk. Smokers and those with diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity or a family history are also at risk, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

“I would encourage anyone with a risk factor for kidney disease to be checked by their GP. The check is simple and involves a blood pressure measurement, blood test and urine test.”

A decade on from his transplant and kidney health is still something Mr Frost considers daily, and urges all residents to do the same.

“Just make sure you keep up all your prescribed medication, eat the right food, stay out of the heat and drink plenty of fluids. I play lawn bowls and I make sure I drink plenty of water otherwise I get cramps,” Mr Frost said.

For more information on kidney health visit www.worldkidneyday.org.

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Media contact: Alicia Temple | Alexia Kelly | 5202 0083 | 0408 713 747

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