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Press release

Mackay gets new dialysis transport service

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Chronic kidney disease patients in Mackay will soon be able to make the trip to hospital for treatment through a safe, affordable, and reliable new transport service, delivered by community volunteers.

The service is an initiative of the Kidney Support Network's (KSN) Mackay branch, which will officially open on Friday to provide support for people who suffer from chronic kidney disease and their families.

KSN chief executive Kay Schafer said the transport service will initially be used by around 20 patients to travel to Mackay Hospital for renal dialysis.

"The local community identified a clear need for us to set a branch in Mackay and provide this transport service," Ms Schafer said.

"We received a lot of requests and support from current patients and their families, health professionals at the local hospital, and local politicians.

"Many patients undergoing treatments have to attend the renal unit three times each week for up to five hours each day.

"They are typically older and very ill, and don't have access to a vehicle or are unable to drive themselves, which places a huge burden on their carers and family.

"We also have many patients who have no one they can rely on for transport, and can't afford to pay for it while struggling to make ends meet on the pension.

"We hope this service may expand in the future to cover surrounding districts and also to transport kidney patients to general medical appointments."

KSN Mackay received funding from the Community Gambling Benefit Fund of \$30,000 to purchase a transport vehicle, and the Macrossan and Amiet Charitable Foundation which contributed \$2000 to set up the new office.

Rio Tinto Coal Australia's Hail Creek Mine Community Development Fund also contributed \$7,000 to provide Queensland Transport-accredited training for volunteer drivers.

Mackay renal patient Douglas Keeton said the new service will be invaluable and will ease the strain on families.

"My wife currently drives me to my dialysis treatments, which doubles the use of our only car and incurs extra expense, as well as taking up her time," Mr Keeton said.

"I have noticed older patients, who are unable to drive, sometimes have to wait long periods of time after their treatments before they are collected.

"This extra waiting time is quite traumatic to a person who has just undergone a six hour treatment.

"Some patients feel dizzy and unwell after dialysis, and require oxygen and rest for long periods, which makes it unsafe for them to drive home themselves."

Hail Creek Mine general manager operations Andrew Woodley said he was pleased to strengthen the health services in the region and improve the quality of life of renal patients.

“We are very supportive of introducing a transport service to help people who are disadvantaged due to their health,” Mr Woodley said.

“There was no transport service available in the Mackay region that offered patients an affordable and reliable service, delivered by caring members of the community.

“This new service will improve the quality of life of not only the renal patients, but also their friends and family who are often under enormous pressure to juggle their lives around hospital visits.”

Members of the public interested in becoming a volunteer driver are invited to come along to the launch of the new office at 10am on Friday 10 September at Shop 6, 106 Nebo Road, Mackay (The Fourways).

They will have the opportunity to check out the new dialysis transport vehicle, inspect the new office, see what services and resources are available, and meet current volunteers.

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Attached photo - KSN volunteer Colin McFarlane assists Brisbane patient Veronica Conway from one of the health-related transport vehicles being operated by KSN across the state.

