



Under embargo

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Urgent action needed to improve health outcomes for Australians with Type 1 Diabetes

The Type 1 Diabetes Opinion Leaders Group today released its statement of issues affecting Australians with Type 1 Diabetes, stressing that more needs to be done to reduce the impact of the disease that causes 80% of its sufferers to develop retinopathy (vision threatening eye disease) after 15 years of Type 1 diabetes.

Commenting on the statement, Ms Kate Gilbert, Founder and President of the Type 1 Diabetes Network, said the statement confirmed that there were a range of fundamental issues requiring urgent attention to improve health outcomes for Australians with Type 1 Diabetes.

Ms Gilbert, a diabetic since age five, said the release of the statement was timely with evidence-based clinical targets, essential monitoring and the management of risk factors achieved by less than 20% of Australians with Type 1 Diabetes.

Senator Guy Barnett, Senator for Tasmania and also a Type 1 Diabetic, will launch the Statement today at the Australian Diabetes Society and Australian Diabetes Educators Association Annual Scientific Meeting. Senator Barnett said he was concerned about the poor health outcomes in Australians with Type 1 Diabetes and that the statement represents a step in the right direction for improving services and health outcomes for all Australians with Type 1 Diabetes.

The statement identified ten key issues requiring urgent attention:

1. **Access to specialist medical care** is very limited, especially in rural and remote areas
2. **Complexity of Type 1 Diabetes** is not well understood nor managed
3. **Coping with long-term complications** of Type 1 Diabetes is left to the individual with minimal resources
4. **Hospital admissions**, planned and emergency, are poorly managed when a diabetes team is not involved
5. **System for the essential long-term monitoring** of Type 1 Diabetes is inefficient and highly ineffective
6. **Adolescence and young adulthood** is a critical stage with the worst outcomes
7. **Access to the best treatments and medical technologies** is dependent on ability to pay, not medical need
8. **Training schools** about the basic needs of children with Type 1 Diabetes occurs haphazardly
9. **Peer learning** opportunities are essential but very limited and difficult to access
10. **Leadership and advocacy** for Type 1 Diabetes needs to be strengthened urgently.

The Type 1 Diabetes Opinion Leaders Group proposes a range of solutions to address these issues including the provision of access to specialists via internet-based communications and is calling on the government to support these initiatives.

Assoc Prof Maarten Kamp, an Endocrinologist with a major interest in diabetes in young adults, and President, Australian Diabetes Society said that national leadership and a shared commitment across jurisdictions and the health care sector was the best way to address these issues.

“Most people with Type 1 Diabetes require complex support with the management of their Diabetes that is currently unavailable,” Assoc Prof Kamp said. “Patients report making treatment decisions that lead to suboptimal outcomes, because of a lack of specialist medical advice, and this is even more critical in rural and regional areas.

Throughout 2008, the major diabetes organisations, health professional bodies, industry groups, people with Type 1 Diabetes and parents of children with Type 1 Diabetes have been working together to identify the key issues which need to be addressed and to develop solutions to improve health outcomes for people with Type 1 Diabetes in Australia.

Development of the Statement has been facilitated by The Type 1 Diabetes Network, a ten year-old consumer group which manages the Reality Check website and produces resources such as Starter Kit for Newly-Diagnosed Adults.

More detailed information about the statement and the launch can be found at www.d1.org.au/issues.

Media contacts

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Note – Senator Barnett, Assoc Prof Kamp and patients with Type 1 diabetes (in each state and territory) are available for media interview. Please contact Susan or Kate for further information.

Explanation of Type 1 Diabetes

Type 1 Diabetes is a life-long autoimmune disease, unlike the more common Type 2 Diabetes, it is not caused by diet or lifestyle. Type 1 Diabetes usually begins in childhood or early adulthood, although it can occur at any age. It can strike infants as young as 8 weeks old. People with Type 1 Diabetes must take up to six insulin injections every day for the rest of their lives, just to stay alive.