


ABC Online**AM - Community celebrates small win in fight against kidney disease**

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Reporter: Anne Barker

HAMISH ROBERTSON: One of the most isolated communities in Australia is celebrating a small achievement that could end some of the tragic consequences of kidney disease.

The tiny community of Kintore in the Western Desert has possibly the highest rate of kidney failure in the country - 40 times higher than the national average.

But now the community has saved enough money to buy its own dialysis machine and a training facility in Alice Springs that will mean that many patients who disappear into distant hospitals can finally return home to live.

And as Anne Barker reports, it's all being made possible with the proceeds of a million dollar art auction at Sotheby's.

ANNE BARKER: 550 kilometres west of Alice Springs, Kintore is one of the most remote indigenous communities in Australia

And with medical technology often non-existent for miles around, the high number of residents with kidney failure have until now had no choice but to move permanently to Alice Springs if they want access to daily dialysis

MARLENE NAMPITJINPA: They want to go back to family, to granddaughter, to son, stay in the bush.

ANNE BARKER: Local health worker, Marlene Nampitjinpa, has lost more than her share of family members to renal disease, and many more who've had to leave home.

MARLENE NAMPITJINPA: They get lonely for family, lonely for country, they want to go back, stay in the bush with the family.

ANNE BARKER: The people of Kintore have come to regard kidney disease as a one way ticket away from home and family, and all too often to an early death.

As well as the loneliness and homesickness they face, the loss of so many people from their traditional country has devastated community life, disrupting employment and school, and causing social, financial even cultural poverty.

But today the people of Kintore truly have something to sing about - a new training facility in Alice Springs, and a bright new dialysis machine at Kintore, mean patients can now learn to dialyse themselves and return home for good.

One of the project's managers, Sarah Brown, says the entire community is hugely excited.

SARAH BROWN: It will mean reconnecting with family, being able to look after country again, of taking part in important community events, of taking their place back in the community and helping to make those communities vibrant and strong for the future. They'll be there to teach their kids and their grandkids.

ANNE BARKER: But none of this would have been possible if it weren't for the dream of one Kintore resident, the Lutheran pastor Zimran Tjampitjinpa, who helped to raise one million dollars in a single night, by auctioning the paintings of prominent Kintore artists at Sotheby's in Sydney, but who sadly never lived to see his dream come true.

SARAH BROWN: Unfortunately he died some time after the auction, so he never got to see his vision in reality. And certainly people remember him with great fondness and great appreciation of the work that he did.

HAMISH ROBERTSON: *Sarah Brown, from the Kintore dialysis project, she was talking to Anne Barker.*

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