**Dr Marisa Paterson MLA**

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBIDGEE

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Motion to address gender inequalities in cardiovascular disease outcomes**

On Tuesday 11 October, Dr Marisa Paterson MLA will introduce a motion to the ACTs Legislative Assembly calling on the ACT Government to improve the understanding of the impact of cardiovascular disease’s (CVD)on women. The motion calls on the ACT Government to improve data collection and reporting and raise awareness of cardiovascular disease in women through community campaigns.

Dr Paterson states: “The disparity in health outcomes for women with CVD, compared to men, are significant and highlight a need at both the ACT and Federal Government levels for more to be done to ensure women with CVD do not experience worse outcomes”.

According to the Heart Foundation cardiovascular disease (CVD) in women in under-recognised, under-treated and under-researched. CVD is the leading cause of death and illness among Australian women, with recent data indicating that rates of CVD hospitalisation amongst young women are increasing – however, overall hospitalisation rates for women overall are substantially less than men

“The statistics are really concerning, women have a significantly lower rate of hospital attendance when showing signs of cardiovascular disease, including heart attacks. The medical follow up from one year to four years following a heart attack is significantly less for women” Dr Paterson says.

One of the reasons may be that women typically don’t have the “classic” signs of a heart attack. “Women experience heart disease differently to men.  It is important for public and healthcare professionals to be aware of the risk factors (such as depression, premature menopause and PCOS) and heart attack warning signs (including non-chest pain symptoms such as jaw, shoulder or back pain, nausea or vomiting, dizziness, shortness of breath, indigestion, or fatigue) that are specific to women” says David Lloyd, Chief Executive Officer, Heart Foundation. These symptoms may develop slowly over hours or days and even come and go. Women and medical personnel may also attribute symptoms to other health conditions such as indigestion, which may lead to misdiagnoses.

Dr Paterson said: “We need to improve the data collection on everything to do with CVD in respect to gender, to ensure that there is equality in health care. We also clearly have a lot of work to do in the community to raise awareness of how symptoms present in women, and what you should do if you experience these symptoms”.

In 2020, in the ACT, 48 people in 100,000 died from coronary heart disease, on par with the national average (49/100,000).

In 2019, the ACT has the lowest age standardised rate of hospitalisation from coronary heart disease in Australia, with 29 per 10,000 – compared with a national average of 55, according to the Heart Foundation.

David Lloyd, Chief Executive Officer, Heart Foundation welcomed the motion, and said “it helps to place the important matter of women’s distinctive experience of cardiovascular disease in the spotlight”. The Heart Foundation also encourages women 45 years or older to ask their GP about a Medicare-subsidised Heart Health Check.

Statement ends

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