

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **‘CHECK YOUR NECK, REALLY WHY?’**

At the start of **May**, the Australian Thyroid Foundation’s (ATF) **Thyroid Awareness Month**, the ATF is calling upon all Australians to be aware of their thyroid health.

Thyroid Disorders affect all Australians of all age groups and demographics. Awareness is the key to ensuring you do not overlook a thyroid disorder which could be affecting your health and wellbeing.

- 1 in 10 Australians will be affected by some form of thyroid disorder
- 7 of the 10 are women
- Over 1 million Australians are undiagnosed
- 60,000 Australians are diagnosed each year
- Thyroid Cancer is increasing, affecting younger Australians
- Iodine Deficiency & Thyroid Disorders affect pregnancy outcomes for women of childbearing years.

As the Australian Education, Support, Advocacy and Awareness Organisation the ATF wants all Australians to be aware and not ignore any symptoms which may be related to thyroid disease.

“Women should be particularly aware and ensure their thyroid status has been determined before they decide to begin a family, as iodine deficiency and thyroid autoimmune disease can affect their pregnancies and newborn development” says Beverley Garside – ATF CEO.

“As women are so busy with family, career and their lives, the ATF want all women to realise their health is just as important as their family. Women can easily overlook symptoms and the importance of diagnosis, as women do when their life is so busy” says Beverley.

“All Australians should be aware of their family history - if members of your family have been affected by some form of thyroid disorder, please ensure you do not overlook any symptoms. Early detection is important, a simple blood test and if necessary a thyroid ultrasound examination will either determine or eliminate the possibility” states Prof Creswell Eastman – ATF Principal Medical Advisor.

If you are at all concerned, please do not hesitate to visit your GP and discuss your concerns.

“2020 is the ATF’s 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of supporting and educating its members and the general public about the importance of Good Thyroid Health. We are very proud to have reached this milestone

and we look forward to continuing our work into the future and continuing to raise awareness” says Beverley Garside.

The thyroid gland is located at the front of the neck, below the voice box. As part of the endocrine system, the thyroid plays a critical role in the healthy function of the body, influencing and regulating the activity of all cells and tissues. A healthy thyroid gland uses ingested iodine from iodine enriched foods to produce thyroid hormones which regulate body and brain growth and development, body temperature, energy levels and metabolic functions.

May is Thyroid Awareness Month in Australia, which incorporates World Thyroid Day (25 May) and International Thyroid Awareness Week (25-31 May)

For Information, or to support the ATF, please visit [www.thyroidfoundation.org.au](http://www.thyroidfoundation.org.au)

~ ENDS ~

**For all media enquiries, please contact:**

Beverley Garside

Chief Executive Officer

Australian Thyroid Foundation

M: 0416 269 982 | E: [beverley@thyroidfoundation.org.au](mailto:beverley@thyroidfoundation.org.au)

**About thyroid disease**

The thyroid gland is a soft, small bow-shaped gland, located in the front of the neck, below the voice box or larynx (Adam’s Apple) on either side of the trachea (windpipe). Thyroid disease is usually caused by an autoimmune disease, which affects more women than men. Iodine deficiency is the most common worldwide cause of thyroid disorders. Along with auto-immune thyroid disease, a low iodine diet can cause hypothyroidism, an enlarged thyroid gland (goitre) and can affect fertility, pregnancy outcomes and foetal brain development.

**About the Australian Thyroid Foundation**

The Australian Thyroid Foundation Ltd (ATF) was founded in 1995 and is now the peak advocacy and support organisation for Australians living with a thyroid disorder. The ATF is a national not-for-profit organisation with a focus on providing education and support to its members and promoting Good Thyroid Health messaging throughout the community. The ATF is a member of Thyroid Federation International (TFI), a world-wide thyroid patient organisation dedicated to global action of thyroid related issues.