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Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia Welcomes New CEO

National patient support organisation and registered charity Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia welcomes a new CEO, following an extensive search. **Sarah Emery** has been appointed to replace Maria Said AM, who announced her intention to step aside as CEO and move into a new senior role within the organisation in July 2025.

Sarah brings a wealth of experience and business acumen to the role. Most recently, she was Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Deputy Chief Executive Officer at Assistance Dogs Australia, where she led an ambitious transformation plan that expanded advocacy efforts, diversified funding and significantly increased the number of clients able to access life-changing services.

Sarah offers more than 14 years' leadership experience in health-focused organisations, both commercial and not-for-profit. Throughout her career she has led multidisciplinary teams through complex change and growth; building stronger organisations that deliver greater reach and real outcomes for those that they serve.

Michael Linehan, Chair of Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia, says, "We are very pleased to appoint Sarah Emery as CEO of Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia. Sarah's leadership experience and her values-driven approach will build on Maria Said's remarkable legacy and ensure the organisation continues to grow its reach, strengthen its voice, and improve the lives of Australians living with allergic disease."

Sarah holds an MBA from Deakin University and has undertaken extensive professional development over the course of her career. She began her career as a trained veterinary nurse before moving into senior leadership roles across the healthcare sector.

She has a deep understanding of the for-purpose sector and served on the board of the Illawarra Suicide Prevention Awareness Network as executive chairperson for four years.

"While my career has spanned both animal health and human health sectors, the common thread has always been improving outcomes for people," Sarah says. "I bring a values-led, people first leadership style that prioritises collaboration, trust, clear communication and accountability."

Sarah has seen firsthand the complexities and challenges of living with allergic disease, as a close friend's daughter is at risk of anaphylaxis to tree nuts. "I've witnessed the constant care, advocacy and vigilance that living with allergic disease requires," she says. "It's made me appreciate firsthand the unique role A&AA plays and could play for so many Australians, and being able to contribute to this impact excites me."

After 26 years at the helm, **Maria Said** is, following a period of transition, stepping into a newly created senior role that will allow her to focus on advocacy and stakeholder relationships. "I'm looking forward to sharing everything I've learned with Sarah and to working with her in this exciting time of growth for our organisation," Maria says.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS:

Available for interview:

Sarah Emery
Maria Said AM

FURTHER BACKGROUND

About Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia: Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia is a registered charity and patient support organisation that aims to improve awareness of allergy in the community through education, advocacy and support. Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia has a wide range of educational materials, resources, workshops and seminars and operates the National Allergy Helpline. Part of an international alliance of like-minded organisations, Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia works closely with the peak medical body, the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA).

ALLERGY FACTS

- An estimated 8.2 million Australians (30%) live with allergic disease (Deloitte, ASCIA, NAC 2025), [up from 4.1 million \(19.6%\) reported in 2007](#).
- The annual cost of allergic disease has reached \$18.9 billion in financial costs and a further \$44.6 billion in wellbeing losses (Deloitte, ASCIA, NAC 2025), [up from \\$30 billion in 2007](#).
- [One in 10 babies](#) have a confirmed food allergy. [One in 20 adults](#) report a medication allergy. [One in 4](#) Australians have hay fever – up from one in 7 in 2008. [Twelve people](#) die from bee or wasp stings each year.
- First Nations people are twice as likely to present at hospital with asthma and other allergy related illnesses, with [emergency department presentations significantly increasing between 2018 to 2023](#).
- The [Australian Capital Territory](#) has some of the highest rates of allergic disease.
- Food allergy peaks in childhood, hay fever in teens and young adults, and drug allergy in older adults.
- Conditions often co-occur, meaning many people – and households – manage more than one allergic disease at the same time.
- [Anaphylaxis deaths increased by 7%](#) annually in Australia between 1997 and 2013 – mostly triggered by foods, insect stings or medications.