



MEDIA RELEASE

GREATER COMMITMENT NEEDED TO ADDRESS KIDNEY HEALTH CONCERNS

Kidney Health New Zealand (KHNZ) congratulates the Hon Dr David Clark on his appointment as Minister of Health. While the previous government oversaw a number of significant kidney health initiatives over their last term, there is still much more that needs to be done, according to KHNZ chief executive Max Reid.

“The past year has seen the passing of the Compensation for Live Organ Donors Act (with unanimous cross-party support) and, more recently, the adoption of a national Strategy for Deceased Organ Donation. Given NZ’s relatively low organ donation rates – especially deceased organ donation – both initiatives represent a much needed step forward, “ Mr Reid says. “But the success of such initiatives – especially the Deceased Organ Donation Strategy – depends on their being adequately resourced.

“KHNZ remains very concerned at the negligible funding allocated to the Deceased Organ Donation Strategy by the previous government, and at the lack of any clear implementation plan some six months after the Strategy’s launch.

“KHNZ is also concerned at the previous Health Minister’s failure to take any responsibility for owning the issue of ‘away from home’ dialysis. With an estimated two thousand kidney patients receiving haemodialysis, travel away from home – for family occasions, work commitments, or simply a holiday – is dependent upon their being able to access dialysis treatment through renal units operated by eleven of the twenty District Health Boards. With their dialysis services currently operating at or above capacity, however, all eleven renal units are struggling to meet local demand for dialysis, let alone being in a position to offer support to patients from other districts. The end result is dialysis patients effectively imprisoned in their own community.

“Perhaps of greatest concern,” Mr Reid suggests, “are the growing disparities in relation to access to renal services. The incidence of kidney disease amongst Māori, for example, is up to five times that of the general population. Despite this, Māori are significantly less likely to receive appropriate treatment. Younger kidney patients are also significantly disadvantaged compared with the rest of the population, as are rural patients in comparison with their urban counterparts.”

Such issues need to be urgently addressed, according to Mr Reid, who looks forward to meeting with the new Minister to discuss how these concerns can best be ameliorated.

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For further information, questions or comment, please contact:

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Kidney Health NZ (formally the Kidney Foundation) is a national organisation supporting kidney patients and their families by way of education, advocacy and research across all areas of kidney health - including organ donation and transplant, dialysis, early detection and prevention of chronic kidney disease. For further information or advice, contact the Kidney Health Helpline – 0800 KIDNEYS (543 639)