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For immediate release

### **CALLING FOR EQUITY FOR DISABLED PERSONS FROM ACC**

On a day dedicated to the rights of disabled persons this Saturday, the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand is calling on politicians and leaders in the health sector and ACC to make the tens of thousands of New Zealanders living with disabilities resulting from stroke eligible for ACC.

Stroke is our country's leading cause of adult disability, with over 9,500 strokes occurring each year, or one every 55 minutes. They are also occurring in younger people more than ever before.

Someone who has had a stroke is not covered by ACC, because it is seen as a "non-injury disability", despite strokes being just as devastating as an "accidental injury disability". We think it is unjust that a brain injury from stroke is treated differently from a brain injury caused by a car, sport or work related accident.

When ACC was formed in 1967, there were to be two stages – firstly, as an insurance scheme for accidental disability, to be followed by a second stage to extend coverage for non-accident disability. Over 50 years later and ACC's full implementation has never been completed. This means that people who have experienced a stroke have no access to ACC's services, such as ACC's rehabilitation and income cover, and this is inequitable.

Jo Lambert, CEO of the Stroke Foundation, says of the issue, "It's International Day of People with Disabilities and perfect timing to ask why people living with disabilities due to stroke continue to be ineligible for ACC support, given it is the leading cause of adult disability in Aotearoa New Zealand."

"Stroke can devastate families. People can take a long time to recover, if at all, and carers and whānau make big adjustments to their lives to assist in their loved one's recovery journey. It is unjust that someone impacted by stroke is treated differently to someone with similar disabilities from an accident. Both can be life-changing events, and 50 years is too long to make good on the original vision of ACC.

"While we are encouraged to see a willingness by the government to make some changes to ACC through the introduction of the *Accident Compensation (Access Reporting and Other Matters) Amendment Bill* introduced to parliament last week, these changes fail to address

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the fundamental inequity to compensation if an injury is not caused by an accident. Until the scheme is expanded to address the needs of those affected by stroke, annual reports on lack of access to the Scheme will serve only to tell us what we already know, that many are underserved.

“We want to start the kōrero with decision makers to address this inequity and ensure that people impacted by stroke receive the support to which they should be entitled.” (ends)

### **Media enquiries**

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### **About the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand**

The Stroke Foundation is a national charity in New Zealand focused on the prevention of and recovery from stroke. For over 40 years we have actively promoted ways to avoid stroke and dedicated ourselves to working closely with stroke survivors across the country. The generosity of New Zealanders enables us to help thousands of stroke survivors every year; providing them with critical services to ensure the best possible outcomes – not just for themselves, but also their family/whānau and carers too. To find out more about the Stroke Foundation, go to [www.stroke.org.nz](http://www.stroke.org.nz)