



**Monday 12 October 2020**

## **STEPS TO STAMP OUT THE SILENT KILLER**

The Stroke Foundation of New Zealand's Big Blood Pressure Check Van is set to begin travelling the lower North Island offering free blood pressure checks as part of an effort to ensure that all New Zealanders have access to a free check at least once a year.

Sponsored by Ryman Healthcare in October 2018, the van initially travelled the country for a year offering New Zealanders the opportunity to have a free check and to learn more about the link between high blood pressure and stroke and the serious nature of this silent killer.

So successful was this programme, Ryman Healthcare agreed to fund the programme for three more years, and with funds raised from this year's Wellington Round the Bays event, the van will now permanently be stationed in the Wellington region, servicing the lower North Island up to Taranaki and though to Gisborne.

With a second van now operating in Auckland and plans in place for a further van to operate in the South Island, the Stroke Foundation is making it easier and more accessible for New Zealanders to get their blood pressure checked. High blood pressure puts strain on all the blood vessels throughout the body including the ones in the brain, which can result in a stroke. As high blood pressure doesn't usually have any symptoms, the only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to get tested.

Mark Vivian, Stroke Foundation CEO said: "Research<sup>1</sup> shows over 11,000 people are predicted to experience a stroke this year. By investing in stroke prevention initiatives, more lives will be saved. The van will allow us to visit communities across the lower North Island and share important information about stroke and stroke risk factors, helping to reduce the number of people impacted by stroke.

High blood pressure is manageable and can often be controlled efficiently through lifestyle changes and if necessary, medication. We know that the van has been a successful prevention initiative to date, offering over 15,000 free blood pressures in the last two years. Our goal is to get another van operating in the South Island to reach more communities and help more Kiwis."

Check out where the van will be next, by visiting our website: <https://www.stroke.org.nz/big-blood-pressure-check-van>

Our team will be adhering to the Government and Ministry of Health Alert Levels and will only operate this service if it is safe to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> The Stroke Foundation commissioned the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research to understand the social and economic cost of stroke to New Zealand in 2020: <https://www.stroke.org.nz/stroke-foundation-and-nzier-research>

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**About the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand**

The Stroke Foundation is the only national charity in New Zealand focused on the prevention of and recovery from stroke. For 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 Zealander's 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. Three quarters of strokes are preventable, so we will continue our vital awareness campaigns and health promotion programmes - saving thousands of lives. To find out more about the important work the Stroke Foundation does go to [www.stroke.org.nz](http://www.stroke.org.nz)