



Hon David Seymour
Associate Minister of Health (Pharmac)

28th November 2023

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Dear Minister,

Removal of Pharmac's Chair Mr Maharey

Congratulations on your appointment to the role of Associate Minister of Health (Pharmac).

Rare Disorders New Zealand (RDNZ) has long campaigned for people with rare disorders to have access to the medicines they need to enable them to live as well as possible for as long as possible, and we look forward to constructively working with you as we continue the process of making this a reality.

A significant barrier to making progress has been Pharmac's culture of negativity towards the New Zealanders it should be supporting, which is directly attributable to its poor leadership.

In particular we draw your attention to the Pharmac Chair's failure to hold his Chief Executive to account for the disparaging language revealed in internal correspondence between Pharmac executives regarding patient advocates, in particular journalist Rachel Smalley. I have attached an opinion piece written by RDNZ's Chair, James McGoram, explaining why this matters.

Mr Maharey's failure to take strong decisive action demonstrates non-compliance with the requirements of the Minister of Health's Letter of Expectations, to engage in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Consumer Expectations.

On behalf of those with rare disorders who have been or who are being denied access to medicines I am therefore writing to you as Minister asking you to remove Mr Maharey from his role of Pharmac's Chair, with immediate effect. RDNZ's call is supported by twenty three support groups (see next page) for whom access to medicines is literally a matter of life and death.

This will send a clear message to those who are being denied access to medicines that there will be a new respectful collaborative approach to decision making which seeks to identify solutions rather than impose barriers. It will also send a clear message to the Pharmac executive that they will from now on be held to account.

RDNZ has twice asked the then Health Minister Verrall to take action, but we were ignored. We look forward to you as the incoming Minister engaging with more integrity and respect, and we'll be pleased to meet with you to explain our position further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Higgins'.

Chris Higgins
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cc Minister of Health
Associate Ministers of health

