

MEDIA RELEASE

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Kidney Community Mourns Jonah Lomu

Australia's peak kidney health organisation, Kidney Health Australia, has paid tribute to New Zealand rugby union legend, Jonah Lomu, following his sudden passing last night at the age of 40.

Lomu was diagnosed with Nephrotic Syndrome – a rare type of kidney disease – at the age of 20, the year after he debuted for the All Blacks.

Kidney Health Australia CEO and Managing Director, Anne Wilson, was shocked and saddened by the news and extended her condolences to Jonah's loved ones and the rugby union community.

"Our thoughts are with Jonah's wife, Nadene, his family, and his All Blacks team mates at this tragic time," said Ms Wilson.

"Jonah was a champion not only of the game, but also of the kidney cause," added Ms Wilson, "His passing is a devastating loss to millions of rugby and sporting fans around the world, but also to the global kidney community for whom he was such an inspiration."

In Nephrotic Syndrome, the kidney filters are damaged and large amounts of protein are leaked through the kidneys and are removed from the body in urine. As a consequence of the loss of protein, the body's level of protein drops below normal, swelling occurs in various parts of the body, and the cholesterol level rises in the blood. Nephrotic Syndrome can lead to end stage kidney disease, where individuals must start dialysis treatments or receive a kidney transplant to survive.

A rare disease, Nephrotic Syndrome is diagnosed in approximately three in every 100,000 adults and five in 100,000 children each year.

"Kidney disease in any form is an insidious disease and one that often goes undetected," added Ms Wilson, "Currently, 90% of Australians affected by kidney disease are unaware that they have it, as there are often no warning signs – it is a silent killer."

"It is critical to learn about your kidney health and to ask your doctor for a kidney check – when your kidneys shut down, your body shuts down."

The most recent data shows that 11,774 Australians currently depend on dialysis to stay alive and 1,129 Australians are on the waiting list for a life saving kidney transplant.

Kidney Health Australia, formerly the Australian Kidney Foundation, is a national health care charity with a vision 'to save and improve the lives of Australians affected by kidney disease'. As the national peak body, Kidney Health Australia promotes good kidney health through delivery of programs in education, advocacy, research and support.

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