# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Living Life to the Full on Home-Based Dialysis**

Networking and social isolation were two of the key topics at the first Contact Energy Renal Fund patient and support people seminar held this week in Whangarei.

“When Contact Energy offered us the opportunity to provide something for people on home-based dialysis we were so delighted because this is a group that never has the opportunity to come together,” noted renal social worker Nicolette Crump.

The Contact Energy Renal Fund was established as a result of discussions with the Northland District Health Board around the most effective way to support the renal unit.

Contact Energy Community and Head of Environment, Sustainability and Community Tina Porou says that rather than purchasing new equipment for the renal unit, it was decided to put equivalent funds into an endowment to support home-based dialysis.

Guest speakers included the Kidney Society and Civil Defence and another important topic on the agenda was holidays. While it was acknowledged that when people start on home-dialysis things change dramatically in their life it was also stressed that it was as equally important to have a break from the routine, reconnect with family and friends and have fun.

Participants Colleen and Graeme Dunn talked about the sense of loss, the grief, when they thought that they could no longer go on their campervan tours they loved so much.

“Colleen needing home-dialysis was a real curve ball for us and we started thinking that we would need to sell the campervan and sit and wait for God,” offered Graeme.

“But actually the campervan has been our saviour, I built a trailer for all the Peritoneal Dialysis equipment we need to take with us and off we went to the South Island for two months. Being mobile means we can be independent, but still visit family and friends when we want too.”

There was a definite buzz in the air as people worked in small groups talking through things, and then coming back into a big group to share learnings, thoughts.

“I think the way this seminar has been organised is great because rather than just sit and listening to people we have been able to participate, which has been really beneficial,” offered one of the participants.

“Contact Energy, this money has been well invested. It has meant that we could get out of our homes and connect with like-minded people, make new friends, today has been great.”

Contact Energy gifted $25,000 to establish the Renal Fund in 2009, managed by the Northland Community Fund. Since then the endowment has grown to more than $33,000 and is now available to recipients in the form of the financial hardship fund, available at the discretion of the Northland DHB social workers via referral and to host seminars for patients and their support people.

# ENDS

# Photo credit –Liz Inch

Colleen and Graeme Dunn

# About Contact

# Contact is one of New Zealand’s largest electricity generators and retailers, powering more than 550,000 customers across the country with electricity, natural gas and LPG supported by a team of around 1,000 based in communities throughout New Zealand. [www.contact.co.nz](http://www.contact.co.nz)

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