

David Clark resigns as Health Minister following a 'frank' discussion with the PM, who agreed he was a 'distraction' from the covid response. Chris Hipkins to take over until the election



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COVID-19 timeline  
2 July 2020

Tibshraeny, 2020



David Clark. Getty Images.

David Clark has resigned as Health Minister, saying he was becoming a "distraction" from the Government's COVID-19 response.

Education and State Services Minister Chris Hipkins will replace him until the election.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said she had a "frank" and "open" discussion with Clark late last week, and agreed with his assessment of the situation - that he was a distraction.

Clark came under fire last Wednesday when he threw the Director General of Health, Ashley Bloomfield, under the bus for mistakes at the border. A video of him refusing to take responsibility while standing alongside Bloomfield went viral online.

He said he wasn't pushed out of the role. Ardern wouldn't say what would've happened to him had he not resigned.

Clark said he took "full responsibility" for the decisions made and taken under his leadership.

Clark wanted to put it on the record that it was an "honour" to work alongside Bloomfield.

Clark offered his resignation during lockdown when he broke his own rules by going mountain biking and driving to a beach outside of his neighbourhood.

Ardern didn't accept his offer then, because the country was in the eye of the COVID-19 storm and continuity was needed.

Clark said the situation was more stable now, so it was an appropriate time to move on.

He will seek to be re-elected as the MP for Dunedin North, but will no longer be in Cabinet.

Ardern said she planned to reassess who was best placed to take the health portfolio after the election.

She said Hipkins had good operational experience with state services, even though he has no experience in health.

Hipkins said he "liked a good challenge".

Clark and Ardern addressed media in separate press conferences.

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