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National's Shane Reti to retire from politics

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Shane Reti will retire at the election. Photo: RNZ / Mark Papalii

Former National deputy leader Dr Shane Reti has announced he will retire at this year's election.

The Whangārei MP has been in Parliament since 2014. He lost the Whangārei in 2020, before regaining it in 2023.

Reti is currently minister for universities, science and technology, Pacific peoples, and statistics.

The MP said he was "feeling good" about the decision, and was leaving because he needed to spend time with his family.

Reti teared up as he told RNZ his reasons for leaving.

"I've missed many birthdays. I've actually missed my family's weddings as well. There's only so many birthdays and weddings you can miss."

He took on the Minister of Health role after the 2023 election, before notably losing the role in a 2025 reshuffle.

Reti said the role was "a wonderful job" and one he was "probably built for," but was satisfied with the work he had done, particularly expanding the breast cancer screening age.

"There are things that we'd all like to do. But I need to spend time with my family, so it's not that at all. It's just time. Even if I had the portfolio, it's just time."

He served as National's deputy leader under Judith Collins, briefly acting as interim leader after Collins lost a vote of no confidence in 2021.

"Yeah, that's a Trivial Pursuit question coming up with the Young Nats sometime, isn't it? Look, it was a privilege to be the safe pair of hands the party could turn to in tumultuous times."

Reti said he "always felt valued" by the party.

"Highlights include progressing the four lanes to Whangārei and advancing policies that as Minister of Health expanded breast cancer screening for 70-74-year-old NZ women and established a 3rd medical school at Waikato," he said.

"Reshaping the science and technology sector to look more like other small advanced economies that improves benefits to taxpayers has been a privilege - especially amalgamating the seven Crown Research Institutes into three Public Research Organisations."

While he maintained his practising certificate, he did not anticipate owning a practice and doing full-time medicine again.

Reti is the fourth National MP to confirm they will not stand at the election, following Collins, Maureen Pugh, and Paulo Garcia. Meanwhile Port Waikato MP Andrew Bayly will not stand in his electorate, and instead seek a place on the list.

With Collins set to leave Parliament in the coming weeks, it means the prime minister may do a wider ministerial reshuffle and return Reti to the backbenches.

Christopher Luxon said Reti was a "stand-up human being" and a "good, good person" who had helped him settle into Parliament when he first arrived in 2020.

"I love him a lot," Luxon said.

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