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For immediate release

**Basketball hoop casualty gets hospital visit from Breakers**

Alan Newman couldn't help but smile when New Zealand Breakers and Tall Black basketballer Tom Abercrombie popped into his room at North Shore Hospital this afternoon for an impromptu visit.

The 66-year-old is laid up with two broken ankles after falling from a ladder at home.

What was he doing when he fell? Taking down a basketball hoop.

Abercrombie, just home after a nail-biting match against the Adelaide 36ers on their home patch across the Tasman, also saw the irony.

He was visiting the hospital on a day off from training to "spread some Christmas cheer" across the wards and says the encounter with Newman was pure coincidence.

Newman, who lives in Devonport, follows basketball but says he is not as big a fan as his son and grandson.

But he was still aware of Abercrombie's performance in Adelaide – 14 hoops that saw the New Zealanders finish just three points behind the 36ers who sat on 95 points at fulltime.

"I can't say I follow the sport closely," Newman says. "But basketball is a big sport on the North Shore with the Breakers being based here."

Abercrombie is an ambassador for the DHB's fundraising arm, the Well Foundation.

He was accompanied by Santa on his rounds of the wards and stopped to say hello and pose for pictures with staff, patients and visitors.

"It's great to see someone like him doing something like this in his spare time" Newman says.

Waitemata DHB CEO Dr Dale Bramley agrees.

"Christmas can be a particularly challenging time for patients in hospital. Our staff work hard to keep them and their families as comfortable as possible and spend a lot of time decorating the wards to try and give them some sense of what they might otherwise be missing out on.

"Gestures like this really put the icing on the cake and add to the festive spirit."

**Ends**

Caption: North Shore Hospital patient Alan Newman and New Zealand Breaker Tom Abercrombie

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