



AUCKLAND DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD

Communications

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ADHB Media Release

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Joint Response to Medical Laboratory Workers' Industrial Action

Auckland's three metropolitan District Health Boards today announced a united response to ongoing industrial action by the New Zealand Medical Laboratory Workers Union.

From this Friday (August 6), a small number of medical laboratory employees of the Auckland, Counties Manukau and Waitemata DHBs who participate in the industrial action will be suspended each day while the action continues.

The suspensions will last for only up to six hours at a time and wages will be adjusted accordingly.

On behalf of the three DHBs, Counties Manukau Chief Operating Officer Ron Dunham said the union's actions posed an ongoing threat to patient care and its demands were highly unrealistic.

"This move has not been taken lightly and we had hoped the dispute would not reach this point," Mr Dunham said.

"The union's demand is out-of-step with the approach taken by other unions representing health workers and does not recognise the current economic conditions.

"We simply cannot afford this claim at this time.

“The ongoing industrial action is placing a strain on other employees picking up the workload and we thank them for their efforts in protecting patient care. However, this situation is not sustainable and we are not prepared to continue paying for services not being provided by some staff.”

The union’s claims are calculated to represent a cost increase of around 14 per cent.

A two per cent wage increase was accepted in May by the majority of DHB employees with the support of the New Zealand Nurses Organisation, Public Service Association and Service and Food Workers Union.

“An initial offer to medical laboratory workers was rejected and a revised offer has now been tabled with the union,” Mr Dunham said.

“Unfortunately, the New Zealand Medical Laboratory Workers Union has continued to issue strike notices and pursue industrial action while this offer is put to members and has indicated that the ballot will take at least three weeks to complete.

“Enough is enough – we cannot go on like this indefinitely and there is no capacity in our budgets to meet the union’s demands.

“We are also concerned about ensuring equity among staff and up until now there have been no financial consequences for those not fulfilling their full range of duties.

“We have to be responsible in the way we spend public funds and it is not reasonable to continue paying a full wage to employees who are participating in sustained industrial action which is having an ongoing impact on services.”

Mr Dunham said the DHBs had decided against exercising stronger options such as locking workers out at this stage.

“We urge the union to lift the industrial action while its members consider the revised offer and, if that occurs, there will be no need for us to suspend any staff,” he said.

“Suspensions will continue until industrial action is lifted and for the sake of patients and staff alike, we hope that happens soon.”

ENDS

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