



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **DHBs Deny New Zealanders Career Opportunities**

Anaesthetic Technicians employed at Northland, Lakes and Hawkes Bay District Health Boards are set to strike over the upcoming weeks as this workforce crisis deepens. DHBs are experiencing up to 30% vacancies and are now looking to recruit from the UK.

"This situation presents a double negative for NZ" says Dr Deborah Powell, National Secretary of APEX the union representing Anaesthetic Technicians. "First we have a workforce crisis which is stressing our remaining practitioners and seeing the cancellation of surgery affecting patients. But also, due to the DHBs failure to employ sufficient trainees to maintain a sustainable workforce, we are now looking to import practitioners, effectively denying our own citizens the chance to train and work at this rewarding career."

This workforce is essential for the delivery of surgical services, and is fully DHB trained. The training pathway is an apprenticeship system where the trainees are employed by DHBs through a 3 year training period taking on increased workload, responsibilities and inevitably independent practice as they progress. "We have no shortage of suitable NZ applicants for training positions that do become available." says Dr Powell. "But in order to save money, DHBs have not offered sufficient trainee positions over recent years, despite increasing demand for surgical services. This has resulted in the current crisis."

"APEX believes the DHBs failure to employ sufficient New Zealanders into trainee positions has not just caused the current crisis, but is now denying New Zealanders a career opportunity." says Dr Powell adding that "The cost of importing practitioners is also higher than training our own when recruitment and relocation costs are taken into account."

Mediation between APEX and DHBs continues this week in a bid to gain a settlement prior to strike action being necessary.

#### **ABOUT ANAESTHETIC TECHNICIANS**

Anaesthetic Technicians are essential members of the surgical team. They work mainly in operating theatres, providing skilled assistance to the Anaesthetist. Anaesthetic Technicians check and maintain the anaesthetic machines and other related equipment, ensure appropriate equipment and drugs are available, assist with inserting airway devices and venous/arterial cannulas, and act as advocates for patients. While Anaesthetic Technicians work predominantly in operating theatres, they are called upon to work in any area where an anaesthetic may be given, including CT, MRI & radiology, ED & intensive care.

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Dr Deborah Powell is available for comment on 021 614 040