



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Monday 1 April 2019

### **Rotorua Hospital Anaesthetic Technicians to Strike for Seven Days**

Lakes DHB Anaesthetic Technicians at Rotorua Hospital have issued notice for an unprecedented seven-day strike (168 hours of complete withdrawal of labour) from 8am on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April until 8am on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April.

This will bring the total strike action of the Anaesthetic Technicians to 16 (24-hour) days of strike action since October 2018. They have been bargaining their collective agreement with the DHB since October 2017.

The primary reason for this strike is due to Lakes DHB rescinding its agreement for adequate rest breaks between the start and finish of work. The provision for a 12-hour rest break when ten hours or more had been worked had been in place for decades - before the DHB stopped the practice. Agreement was reached in bargaining to reinstate the 12-hour break, however the DHB rescinded its agreement in December. This resulted in Lakes DHB Anaesthetic Technicians striking for two days and then another five days in February. The previous strike meant patients were transferred to private hospitals at enormous cost to both the DHB and taxpayer.

“We now have the outrageous situation where approximately 150 surgeries will be cancelled, because Lakes DHB has refused to provide the Anaesthetic Technicians with adequate rest breaks. These breaks are essential for the safety of both patients and our members,” says Luke Coxon, APEX Advocate.

The seven-day strike will result in all elective surgery that requires a general anaesthetic to be cancelled or postponed for the week. The Anaesthetic Technicians will still be available to provide life-preserving acute surgery, when acute patients cannot be transported safely to other providers/hospitals. The public will not be placed at risk.

**FURTHER INFORMATION:** Luke Coxon is available for comment on 021 904 888.

#### **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, and during cardiac arrests.

**ENDS**