



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Monday 4 February 2019

### **Rotorua Anaesthetic Technicians Escalate Strike Action and Vote for 5-day Strike**

Frustrated Lakes DHB Anaesthetic Technicians at Rotorua Hospital have now issued notice for an unprecedented a 5-day strike (120 hours of complete withdrawal of labour) from 8am on Monday the 18<sup>th</sup> of February until 8am on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> February.

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

The frustration of the Anaesthetic Technicians has now boiled over to them voting for a full five-day strike. The APEX members did so after Lakes DHB refused to bargain on salary, despite the private sector paying more than 20 per cent higher wages. The DHB refused to provide a justification for its position, after being directed to do so by the Employment Relations Authority. Lakes DHB also rescinded their prior agreement to a crucial health and safety provision, for adequate rest breaks between shifts, which they knew would be a deal-breaker for the Anaesthetic Technicians.

APEX Advocate Luke Coxon says, "Lakes DHB have lost the plot and abrogated their responsibility to bargain in good faith. When we meet the DHB, they come to the table with no room to manoeuvre and only engage in surface bargaining. To add insult to injury, they also rescinded an agreement to provide rest breaks – breaks needed to ensure the health and safety of our members – that had been in place for decades. The Anaesthetic Technicians are angry and determined. They are a skeleton crew that go out of their way for their employer – they will, however, not allow their employer to place them at risk. The DHB should be under no illusion that it needs to return to the table and actually bargain and reach a settlement."

The 5-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. 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**