MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 9 April 2019

Medical Physicists Begin Second Strike

Medical Physicists, who provide essential radiation services to cancer patients, will begin their second strike tomorrow. The strike will last for seven days, from Wednesday 10 April until Wednesday 17 April 2019. After over eight months of negotiations, Medical Physicists have still not received an offer from their DHB employers to settle their multi-employer collective agreement.

While six DHBs in New Zealand offer radiation therapy, the strike will be taking place in five DHBs with Canterbury as the exception.

“Medical Physicists are a small, specialised, crucial workforce, who are often overlooked. With still no offer from their employers to settle their collective agreement, they’re left with no other option but to strike. This is not fair on the patients or on the employees and ultimately shouldn’t be happening,” says David Munro, Senior Advocate, APEX.

“It’s as if the DHBs don’t care about leaving their employees in limbo. Unfortunately, this runs the risk of losing some of the most highly trained, expert Medical Physicists in the world to overseas hospitals. It’s simply not good enough that their DHB employers haven’t even bothered to give them an offer.”

The strike involves restricting work during anti-social hours; a regular feature of life for Medical Physicists, with strike action being escalated even further in Auckland where they will also not be carrying out plan checks after midday.

Balloting is underway for a third strike later in the month.

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ABOUT MEDICAL PHYSICISTS

Medical Physicists work in Radiation Oncology and are responsible for the delivery of radiation treatment in the correct dose to oncology patients. Radiation used in radiation therapy is powerful enough to kill cancer but conversely powerful enough to do a lot of damage to patients if delivered incorrectly. It's the physicists' job to ensure that linear accelerators, other radiation sources, and complex imaging equipment is used with pinpoint accuracy to give the correct dose to millimetre precision. This involves extensive measurements when new equipment is put into use and regular quality assurance on all treatment devices. Physicists also assist radiation therapists and radiation oncologists in planning individual patient's treatment, checking that it is delivered correctly, and continually developing new forms of treatment.