



Northland DHB rejects Employment Relations Authority recommendation to end Anaesthetic Technician dispute

Tuesday 12 February

Northland DHB has rejected the proposal put forth by the Employment Relations Authority (ERA) during facilitation with Anaesthetic Technicians represented by APEX.

APEX and Northland DHB participated in facilitated bargaining on 9 and 11 January. The ERA published its recommendation on 21 January, and APEX members voted to accept it. However, the DHB has rejected the ERA's recommendation — the acceptance of which would have settled the dispute.

“The DHB says it will only make an offer that is ‘based’ on the ERA’s recommendation,” says Luke Coxon, APEX Advocate. “This means it will be worse than the ERA recommends. This is unacceptable and will result in the dispute becoming more entrenched.”

FURTHER INFORMATION

Luke Coxon is available for comment on 021 904 888.

BACKGROUND

The Anaesthetic Technicians at Northland DHB have been trying to address a recruitment and retention crisis. More than 30% of Anaesthetic Technician positions are vacant, requiring those remaining on the job to work additional shifts and overtime. Surgeries have also had to be cancelled due to insufficient staff numbers. Meanwhile, Anaesthetic Technician pay rates in the private sector are up to 30% higher than those in the DHB, which exacerbates staff shortages as staff leave the public health sector for better pay.

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.