



NEW ZEALAND

Medical Laboratory Workers

# UNDER The MICROSCOPE

MARCH 2017



## Public Holidays

The Monday-isation of Waitangi day and Anzac Day continues to be an issue for some members. At Waikato DHB members were not required to be at work on the Monday because it was an observed public holiday. However, because they had already observed their public holiday on Saturday and were not required to be at work on Monday, they had a day of annual leave deducted so as to ensure they received their minimum fortnightly salary or they would be a day's short on pay.

This contravenes section 18 of the Holidays Act 2003 - that is, when annual holidays are to be taken 'must be agreed between the employer and the employee.' We are pleased to report that once the employer was contacted they rectified this error.

If this has happened to you or any of your colleagues please talk to your delegate or contact the office.



## Bargaining Updates:

### Pathlab Whakatane

1.5% increase on salaries and all allowances and technical changes to reflect recent changes to scopes of practices made by the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand.

### Amalgamation Ballot

The amalgamation ballot has now closed with over 93% of members voting in favour. Thank you to our delegates for their assistance in ensuring that as many members as possible had the opportunity to participate in the ballot. There are still administrative matters to sort prior to an amalgamation, with the date set for the 3rd of July 2017. We will be in touch with further information as this comes to hand.

For more information go to the following link on the website <http://nzmlwu.org.nz/amalgamation-with-apex/> or ask your local delegate.

### LSR and SCL Taupo

Laboratory Services Rotorua (LSR) have not been successful in retaining service with Lakes DHB, similarly SCL has not been successful in retaining their contract with Lakes DHB at Taupo Hospital. Pathlab Lakes Ltd a subsidiary of Pathology Associates Ltd, announced on the 2nd of March to staff that they will be the new provider from 1 July 2017.

We will be supporting our members at these sites and ensuring their terms and conditions of employment are adhered to through the transition process. It will be crucial that members check their private emails regularly during this period. If you should have any questions, contact your delegate, or the office.

## Behind the headlines – Effect on Lab Workers During Dental Scare

Hi I'm Bryan Raill and I am a long time delegate in the Laboratory at Middlemore Hospital, and a NZMLWU National Executive member.

We all see the reportage without seeing the backroom effort that goes into ensure the safety of those who've been exposed to infection. The contribution from our laboratories is such an important part of this public reassurance and dealing with the potential exposure to infection.



With the possible exposure (however unlikely) of approximately 2500 children our laboratory at CMDHB is and was at the forefront of the effort to test these children from the potential exposure window from 13th September 2016 to 23 January 2017.

Within the lab this involved us with a staged but still large bolus of work for Hepatitis B and C serology, and HIV serology, and meant some significant commitment from the on-call Biochemistry staff in the testing and volunteers for additional work to help with specimen processing especially over a long weekend. The 0800am to 0800pm 7 day phlebotomy service also required extra hours from our phlebotomists at a distant location along with a great effort from the phlebotomy teams across the region.

Without the new laboratory and automation that we have been using since September 27th 2016 our task would have been much more difficult to manage.

For me being part of the response by the many people involved was a learning experience especially in regard to the planning, support and total commitment at all levels across our DHB and other organisations involved in providing reassurance to the families of these children.

Whilst giving everyone involved in this event a "high five" it also reinforced my view that Medical Laboratory workers are an integral part of health, dedicated practitioners who are always willing to go the extra mile for the patient at the other end of the specimen.

[www.nzmlwu.org.nz](http://www.nzmlwu.org.nz)

contact us: [support@nzmlwu.org.nz](mailto:support@nzmlwu.org.nz)

# Taranaki Lab Restructuring



For some years there has been speculation about the future of laboratory services in Taranaki, and it has been no secret the region's medical service is in imminent need of a new hospital laboratory. It was therefore little surprise to NZMLWU that Taranaki DHB initiated a laboratory restructuring exercise in late 2016. However what did come as a complete bolt-from-the-blue was their decision to only consult about a single option for laboratory restructuring, and that option was to exclusively examine the possibility of MedLab Taranaki providing all hospital and community laboratory services for the region.

We have been advised that the decision to explore this single option arises from recognition of the well-established and comfortable relationship that exists amongst the clinicians and MedLab. That may be the case, however there is a tried and tested approach to contracting medical laboratory services that is now well established in NZ and which the union has much experience of. Apart from being common sense, this approach is mandated by legislation and promulgated by guidelines from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. Put most simply the recommended approach describes a contestable tendering process, and does so for a variety of compelling reasons:

- Competitive tendering is the only way to ensure that the most

cost effective option is identified (seeking a single-tender imposes no discipline on the pricing).

- Without competitive tendering it is difficult to refute accusations of possible nepotism. This is especially so when part of the reason for opting for a single preferred provider is precisely because of the close relationship between the interested parties.
- It cannot be known which provider will be best placed to offer a future restructured service without putting it out there for all comers to consider.
- The nature of a contestable process ensures there is time and opportunity for all stakeholders to consider and offer feedback on a variety of options.
- Where it has been used in the past, competitive tendering has been successful in leading to sustainable ongoing laboratory services.

It is fair to say that NZMLWU is opposing the process that Taranaki has embarked upon. We have made that clear to the DHB, and sought – on several occasions – to have them supply us with the documentation and process that has led them down this risky road. Sadly, despite some initial willingness to engage with us constructively, the DHB has now

closed-shop and forced the union to seek the information we require via the Official Information Act. We have also raised our concern and disappointment with the Director General of Health.



No doubt Taranaki will get a sustainable new laboratory service in the fullness of time which clinicians and the public will be proud of. In the meanwhile however it is certain that they need to 'back the truck up' and look seriously at all possible future options before any final decision is made. The sad fact is that we have seen the damaging effect on our members that a hasty decision about contracting-out can have, one of the worst of these being in Taranaki itself during the "St John of God" era. NZMLWU is working to ensure Taranaki learns the lessons of the past which so far appear to have passed them by.



## Quick-Tip of the Month:

"If your employer raises performance concerns including an intention to develop a "performance improvement plan" (PIP), seek advice from NZMLWU before you do anything else. A PIP must be justified, objective, measurable, clear and collaborative. If not done properly, they can have a detrimental effect on your employment."