



# RADIATION THERAPISTS NEWSLETTER

**AUTUMN 2023 EDITION**

# Te Whatu Ora Are Stealing Our CPD

APEX has requested mediation with Te Whatu Ora – Te Toka Tumai (Auckland) over the organisation's attempt to disappear over \$150,000 of unspent CPD funds, which accumulated during Covid.

Right at the beginning of Covid all of the DHBs issued guidance to all staff on professional development funds which explicitly stated:

**What happens to CME or Professional Development funds that are expiring?** We will carry-over any expiring CME or Professional Development funds that are at risk due to the government's travel restrictions.

Despite us first raising the issue with Auckland DHB and others all the way back in 2021, only Southern

have confirmed CPD entitlements have carried over. However all SMOs were allowed to carry forward their CPD for three years, which means the message from Te Whatu Ora to Radiation Therapists is we think we can steal this money out of your CPD pools and you won't notice. This is an outrageous position by Te Whatu Ora and one which is totally unacceptable and unjustifiable.

It sends the very clear message that Auckland and other Districts which have not rolled over CPD funds, do not respect Radiation Therapists or their need and right to professional development.

APEX has requested urgent mediation on the matter and have made our position on this very clear to Te Whatu Ora.

## Progress on National RT Issues Frozen

Progress on national RT issues is frozen because the Te Whatu Ora department – Central TAS - which looks after employment relations issues for health staff have not delegated this responsibility to anyone, despite their previous RT workforce specialist retiring at the end of January.

This means work we need to progress such as merit progression, and job sizing of designated roles is essentially frozen.

The RT workforce is a small workforce, but not having anyone in Te Whatu Ora with ER responsibility for this workforce now means Te Whatu Ora are in breach of their commitment in the settlement to get a national RT merit progression framework in place by the end of March 2023.

## Know your Rights - Shift Leave

The APEX RT contract provides for extra leave for shift workers at clause 15.7.

The shift leave provision says if you work shifts, including temporary evening shifts when doing a linac replacement, then additional days of annual leave are accrued.

As a very basic example, for each shift with two hours outside 8:00am to 5:00pm a point towards an extra day's leave is counted. Once you hit the qualifying number of points as

below, an extra day's leave is unlocked.

Number of qualifying shifts per annum	Number of days additional leave per annum
121 or more	5
96-120	4
71-95	3
46-70	2
21-45	1

## Annual Leave after Parental Leave

A radiation therapist returning to work after a year of parental leave emailed APEX recently to say that their payslip was not showing any annual leave as accruing from their time during their parental leave. Annual leave accrues as per normal during parental leave, but may have a different value when taken.

Payroll eventually manually calculated the leave and added it to the RTs leave balance – however for those returning or recently returned from parental leave – make sure to check your leave balances are correct, and if not – get in contact with us.

## Waikato RTs – Delegate Vacancy

APEX currently does not have a Waikato RT delegate. Delegates are the local worksite representatives for the union, and provide a link between union members and the APEX office. Delegates receive training on their duties, rights and how to effectively carry out the role. For RTs, delegates are very important as they sit on local CPD committees as well as on the national bargaining team.

To volunteer for the role, please email [rt@apex.org.nz](mailto:rt@apex.org.nz)

# “We Want to See Staff Valued”



Danielle Duff is one of the APEX delegates at Waitaha/Canterbury.

## **Where do you work and what do you do?**

I work as a radiation therapist at Te Whatu Ora Waitaha, Canterbury. I work as a general RT, and as a specialist in adolescents and young adults. I've been working here since 2012 when I finished studying.

## **What does a good day at work look like?**

The joy of getting to support patients and families at the most vulnerable part of their journey and the ability to adapt and tailor care specific to that person.

## **Why did you become an APEX delegate?**

I wanted to see the department well supported and

we wanted to see staff valued. Carolyn and Greta, our previous delegates, were looking to pass on the baton.

## **What kind of duties have you had to do as a delegate?**

Talking to new staff about what unions do and why they should join, making sure the new contract is implemented and advocating for staff on issues with payroll.

## **How do you see advanced practice RT roles changing the profession?**

The idea of being able to hybridise radiation oncology and expand skill sets will allow the team to provide better care. It should improve workloads for RTs, ROs and improve patient throughput and care.

## **What do you think should change in the contract in the future?**

Strengthening the senior and specialist positions at the top of the scale is important as a potential workforce shortage and strains loom in the next five to ten years. In Christchurch it would be great to see more specialist roles across both planning and treatment. It would also be awesome to have more educators to help train new staff on the implementation of new techniques.

## **What do you enjoy doing outside work?**

I am a passionate mountain biker, so outside work I'll be out in the Port Hills biking or at home gardening.