



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 11 March 2019

Frustrated Medical Physicists Across New Zealand Begin 13-Day Strike

Medical Physicists, who provide essential radiation services to cancer patients, will begin a 13-day strike tomorrow from Tuesday 12 March until Monday 25 March 2019. After over seven months of negotiations, they have still not received an offer from their DHB employers to settle their multi-employer collective agreement.

“It’s as if the DHBs don’t care that such a crucial and fragile workforce are being kept in limbo for so long. Without them, no radiation treatment can take place for cancer patients. They may be a small workforce, but they are essential in providing care for New Zealanders,” says David Munro, Senior Advocate. “We train some of the best medical physicists in the world. We know this because as soon as Registrars qualify, they are head-hunted by hospitals overseas, especially in Australia. What incentive is there for them to stay when the pay is better in Australia and their potential DHB employers in New Zealand won’t even make them an offer to settle their collective agreement?”

“The strike action will mean that hundreds of appointments will need to be rescheduled or even cancelled – this should not be happening. The DHBs are asleep at the wheel,” says Mr Munro.

Medical Physicists will be striking at all six DHBs that offer radiation therapy. The strike involves restricting work during anti-social hours; a regular feature of life for Medical Physicists.

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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.