



MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 10 January 2019

Southland Anaesthetic Technicians Strike from Today

Anaesthetic Technicians at Southland Hospital commenced a strike at 0700hrs today, ending at 1600 tomorrow, Friday January 11.

This strike follows the strike in October last year, in an attempt to settle these essential health workers' collective agreement.

Key among the claims in dispute is the requirement for Southern DHB to employ one new Anaesthetic Technician trainee each year at Southland Hospital, to ensure adequate staffing levels for the future. Currently Southland Hospital only has 6 anaesthetic technicians; too few to run a safe service both for the staff and for the public they serve.

"We are asking for a minimum of 9 FTEs on the roster to allow for adequate sleep after on-call and call-back duties," said Dr Powell, National Secretary for APEX the specialist allied scientific and technical staff union in NZ. "This strike is also about ensuring safe healthcare for Southlanders. It is a common occurrence for instance that paediatric MRIs and dental surgeries have to be cancelled because of insufficient Anaesthetic Technician resource."

The Anaesthetic Technicians are also striking over recognition of clinical responsibility by providing additional remuneration for technicians who become specialists in areas such as cardiac support, obstetric emergencies, anaesthesia during paediatric MRIs, organ donation and transplant, workplace education, and difficult intubations (for maintaining airways).

"This strike is, fundamentally, about protecting the future of this profession," says Dr Deborah Powell, National Secretary of APEX, the union representing the striking Anaesthetic Technicians. "Inadequate staffing levels, insufficient trainees, and poor provisions for recognition and development have resulted a perfect storm: the sustainability of this profession is now seriously at risk in NZ."

FURTHER INFORMATION: Dr Deborah Powell is available for comment on 021 614 040.

ABOUT ANAESTHETIC TECHNICIANS

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, and during cardiac arrests.