



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 14 December 2018

Ministerial intervention in Health Sector bargaining frustrating settlements and now provoking strike action

APEX, the union representing allied scientific and technical practitioners in the health sector, supports the statements made on Radio NZ this morning by Jill Ovens, the co-advocate for the midwives' union, MERAS, regarding Ministerial intervention in bargaining in health.

APEX and NZRDA (the union representing New Zealand's Resident Doctors) wrote to the four ministers concerned on 16 November 2018 as increasing levels of strike action were being signalled due to the frustration the current system is imposing.

"We attend bargaining and are told of offers the DHBs wish to make, only to have something entirely different and deficient formally offered after. We're being told that this is due to the Ministry of Health and Ministerial intervention," says Dr Deborah Powell, National Secretary of APEX. "Like the midwives union (MERAS), we have also had promises at the table reneged on, again – according to the employers team – due to the actions of the Ministry of Health acting on instruction from this ministerial group."

"Even if a Ministry-derived offer might be acceptable, the delay in getting sign off is resulting in frustration boiling over into industrial action for some of our members whose collective employment agreements have been expired for well over a year now," says Dr Powell.

Legally, the DHB CEs are the employers of those who work in DHBs. Under the Employment Relations Act it is their legally described responsibility to negotiate and settle collective agreements with unions. That includes the obligation in good faith to bargain directly and in an efficient and effective manner with us. APEX does not believe the current arrangement is meeting this obligation by the DHB CEs.

"The Health and Disability Act does require the DHBs to consult with the Ministry of Health over bargaining, but that means to discuss – it does not mean to be told what to do and what not to do," says Dr Powell. "The DHBs are effectively hiding behind this provision as we assume the pressure from the ministerial group is too intense for them to withstand".

FURTHER INFORMATION

National Secretary Dr Deborah Powell is available for comment on (09) 526 0280.