



Media Release

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Laboratory Union slams DHB for withholding information.

The New Zealand Medical Laboratory Workers Union has lost all patience with the Taranaki DHB's continued obstruction to supplying information about their proposed laboratory restructure.

NZMLWU is the union representing Medical Laboratory workers throughout NZ and is well versed in both the process and issues surrounding the contracting of medical laboratory services. "In November of 2016 Taranaki DHB took the extremely unusual step of deciding to outsource to a single laboratory provider whilst simultaneously naming a preferred provider without any prior testing of the marketplace," says David Munro, advocate for the NZMLWU.

This process undertaken by Taranaki DHB ignores the 'Government Rules of Sourcing' which have been used in all other recent laboratory outsourcing projects around the country. "The rules are there for a reason," said Mr Munro. "They work. Where they have been used the outcome has invariably been successful."

Since December 2016 the union has been seeking disclosure of the information and documentation that has led to the decision. "We first asked for the information in December and whilst the DHB was initially agreeable to supplying it, since then the shutters have gone up and the DHB has refused to supply any information whatsoever." says Mr Munro.

The DHB response has been to seek an extension of time to the union's OIA request due to the work involved with searching for the information sought. "It is incomprehensible to us that the DHB would need any time to find the information since it must be to hand as they are in the midst of decision making about their proposal." Mr Munro remarked. "This is not information that is dusty in the archives, but is living material that the DHB is working with every day."

NZMLWU needs to be satisfied that any proposed arrangement is sustainable to avoid the risk of losing our highly skilled medical laboratory scientists and technicians to the detriment of the health sector and the patients we serve. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the DHB is delaying sending information to the union in the hope that once it is received it will be too late to back up the truck and their proposal will be a fait accompli.

"Where is the good faith in this secretive approach?" asks Mr Munro. "What is the DHB trying to hide and whose interests are they serving?"

If the DHB is acting in the best interests of staff and patients then that should be obvious to all from an examination of the DHB's decision making process. That the DHB continues to hide behind information gatekeeping arouses deep suspicion that something is not right here.

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The New Zealand Medical Laboratory Workers Union is the largest representative body for medical laboratory workers in the public and private sectors. The union covers Medical Scientists, Technicians, Phlebotomists and other laboratory assistants in laboratories throughout New Zealand both in public hospitals and in the community sector.