



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 24 October 2018

Southland Anaesthetic Technicians to Strike

Anaesthetic Technicians at Southland Hospital have given notice of strike action. The strike will begin in the morning of Thursday 25 October and continue for 24 hours, and will include five of the six technicians employed at the location. The Anaesthetic Technicians have three primary claims:

1. Safe staffing levels and adequate staff pipeline
2. Professional development
3. Recognition of clinical responsibility

Safety is Paramount

Key among the claims 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. They are also asking for a minimum of 9 FTEs on the roster to allow for adequate sleep after on-call and call-back duties, and professional development funding so they can meet the Medical Sciences Council's requirements. This strike is also about ensuring safe healthcare for Southlanders. It is a common occurrence for paediatric MRIs and paediatric dental surgeries to be cancelled because of insufficient Anaesthetic Technician resource.

Recognition of Clinical Responsibility

The Anaesthetic Technicians are also striking over recognition of clinical responsibility. Recognising clinical responsibility is about 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 in a perfect storm: this profession in New Zealand is now in peril."

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.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Dr Deborah Powell is available for comment on 021 614 040