
All District Health Boards

DHBs disappointed by strike threat

The country's District Health Boards are disappointed some trainee doctors have chosen to issue notice of strike action instead of joining a sector-wide approach to help address issues of staffing numbers, work hours and fatigue.

The Resident Doctors' Association which represents most Resident Medical Officers – RMOs or Drs in training – has issued notice of a two-day strike on January 15 and 16.

DHB spokesperson Peter Bramley says the action is regrettable as DHBs have made a good offer that builds on past negotiations to deal with stress and fatigue.

“A new system for organising work was agreed in the last RMO pay talks – it has been implemented in more than half of all applicable rosters. It has addressed some RMO concerns about work hours, but other issues have been identified.

“We're not interested in clawing back conditions as suggested but rather are looking for options that allow greater local flexibility in work patterns that support better training and improved clinical care.

“Some RMOs have also formed a new union and negotiated an alternative system of organising work that addresses these issues and complies with the guidelines of the safety and training guidelines of the medical colleges that oversee their professional development.

Dr Bramley says about 10 percent of Resident Medical Officers now belong to the new RMO union and many don't belong to any union at all. “We think many RMOs don't want an industrial response to what is a clinical and training issue.

“DHBs have had plenty of notice and contingency planning is well advanced to ensure emergency and essential services are available to those who need them.

“The union's timing is cynical and DHBs will do what they can to try and avoid the strike, but will be ready if a negotiated solution can't be found.

“The Director-General of Health has created a sector-wide forum to address a range of medical workforce issues including fatigue and wellbeing. It includes the Medical Association, the Medical Colleges and workforce representatives. The RDA has refused to take part.

“Quality patient care that provides meaningful training in a safe environment is something we all want.

“There are still many options before we get to a strike – hopefully we may be able to avoid action with the help of mediation,” says Dr Bramley.

ENDS

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DHB media release re RMO Strike threat
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