
All District Health Boards

29 March 2019

Union action duplicitous

District Health Board's say the four-day strike threatened by the Resident Doctors' Association is a cynical ploy by a union trying to cause maximum disruption to services to distract from the key issue at the heart of this dispute.

Resident Medical Officers who are members of the RDA plan to strike at the start of the school holidays in the week before Easter and DHB Spokesman Dr Peter Bramley says this move will impact patient care with the exception of Canterbury.

"The four strikes to date put significant pressure on DHBs, and hospitals worked hard to minimise the impact on patients. This strike significantly escalates the action and will cause considerable disruption to hospitals services.

"This is unconscionable. The union has asked the Employment Relations Authority for urgent facilitation and the ERA has scheduled further mediation next Friday while it considers the union's application.

"To strike now raises serious questions about the union's intentions and you'd have to ask how committed the RDA is to a negotiated settlement."

Dr Bramley says DHBs respect the right of RDA members to strike – what those who choose to strike need to understand is their actions have consequences.

"We've already told the RDA we would withdraw the lump sum payments that were part of our offer if there was further strike action while still talking.

"If there is no resolution, DHBs will also need to carefully consider their position on the employment contracts to offer RDA members when they change DHBs on their next rotation.

"There's also a serious training question to be considered, and we will ask the medical colleges to review the impact on RMO training from all the lost learning time – which will be 12 days including this strike.

"This dispute is not fundamentally about money – it's about control of the work environment. It is crucial that clinicians can shape rosters with RMOs that provide the services patients need, while supporting the most appropriate training for RMOs.

“DHBs want to decide those rosters without the ability of RDA national office vetoing what’s been agreed by local teams. No other union in health has that power.”

Dr Bramley says DHBs are committed to safe rosters backed by evidence-based practice. We are committed to the right balance of service provision training and employee well-being.

“We’ll continue working in good faith towards a negotiated solution – irrespective of the strikes.

“DHBs are grateful to all other medical and administrative staff who’ll be working hard to keep patients safe during the strike.

“That includes RMOs who are members of the other union, STONZ, and those RDA members who choose not to strike.

“Going on strike while asking for facilitation is duplicitous – you don’t talk about wanting a solution while pursuing further action,” says Dr Bramley.

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