

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate use

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DHBs acting irresponsibly in Resident Medical Officer industrial dispute

By refusing the Medical Council's offer to facilitate talks in the escalating industrial dispute affecting public hospitals, District Health Boards are putting hardworking hospital staff under increasing pressure and risk creating alarm among patients, Association of Salaried Medical Specialists Executive Director Ian Powell says.

"As a regulatory body, the Medical Council rarely involves itself in industrial disputes. That its Chair, Andrew Connolly, has offered to help facilitate a resolution is highly significant and underlines the seriousness of the situation."

Mr Connolly, who wrote to the parties last Friday, has taken the rare step because of his concern about the effect on public safety of the continued strikes.

"This is the second time that DHB bosses have rejected an offer to resolve rostering concerns through a non-adversarial process. Last September we on behalf of senior doctors invited the DHBs to work through these concerns with us and the resident doctors' union collaboratively away from the negotiating table but they gave us the fingers.

"For DHBs to spurn both offers shows they are not looking for a non-adversarial way to settle the dispute. Instead they are trying to run the clock down to 28 February when resident doctors who need to shift to another DHB for training lose their legal right to take their current employment protections with them. DHB bosses are trying to exploit their vulnerable employment situation.

"It is irresponsible of the DHBs to continue their winner-takes-all approach to this dispute with the objective of rendering the Resident Doctors' Association ineffective in representing resident doctors. In industrial relations this is known as union busting," Mr Powell says.

"DHB bosses must stop rejecting circuit breakers. Otherwise, whatever the outcome of this conflict, they will leave a legacy of distrust and bitterness in public hospitals which depend on cooperation and teamwork to provide good patient care.

"Many of the resident doctors affected by this dispute are our potential hospital specialists of the future. DHBs should be their future employer of choice but with this legacy of attempted union busting this is unlikely."



Read more about Mr Powell's view of the safer hours' dilemma here:

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/109936431/blame-dhbs-not-the-unions-for-the-junior-doctors-strike>

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