



NZRDA- New Zealand Resident Doctors' Association

How will your DHB manage prepayment of costs of training? October 2012

One of the new provisions in the MECA this year is the following from clause 28.3 (Costs of Training):

"The parties agree that the employing DHB may, where the employee requests it, directly pay to training providers training costs for RMOs..."

This is a "may" provision so some DHBs may chose not to make this option available – if that is the case it will be identified below.

We have made the DHBs aware that in some instances payment on time is nothing short of imperative. For example if exam fees are not paid on time we cannot sit the exam, leaving us in limbo for another year. As a result we have asked each DHB to indicate any issues and timeframes around prepayment to ensure we are all clear on what will be needed. As a general rule, as much notice as possible is requested, but no less than 6 weeks seems to be "safe". However for more details see below and check with your RMO Unit if at all uncertain.

Finally remember that you still have the option to pay yourself and get the costs reimbursed.

We have NOT had a response at this time from: **Hawkes Bay, Whanganui, Wairarapa, Nelson-Marlborough** (they did email to say they were seeking further advice on the matter), or South Canterbury.

Northland said: *We are currently considering our options and will certainly take the points you have made with regard to promptness of payment etc. on board. We'll update you again when we reach a final landing place.*

Waitemata, Auckland, Counties Manukau (AKA NoRTH) said *in the Auckland region we do process payment direct to the training provider at the request of the trainee. This is on a discretionary basis however and is reserved for instances where a trainee may have difficulty paying the expense direct. Our intention is to continue this practice going forward, therefore payments direct to the training provider will be on a discretionary basis only.*

We endeavour to process all reimbursements within two weeks of receipt, contingent on all necessary documentation being provided to allow processing to occur. In peak processing periods we may operate slightly outside the two week time frame, however work to process all payments as soon as possible.

We would ask that the RMOs submit their training expenses as early as possible to avoid problems, and if there is an RMO training expense which requires reimbursement to a training provider within a specific timeframe that they specifically advise NoRTH of this, so the claim can be fast tracked if required.

Bay of Plenty said: *We already do have provisions in place for direct payment of some work related expenses and training fees – particularly if there are a number of RMOs billed for the same cost at the same time (APCs; college fees; dip Paeds etc.). We also pay on behalf on individuals where the dollar amounts are very high or where not doing so, the RMO would be unable to pay.*

Without exception, (providing we have received all relevant paperwork), all RMO reimbursements are made at the nearest pay cycle. We also encourage reimbursements to be lodged at the time the expense is incurred rather than the end of the training event, which can be a number of months later than the required payment.

Waikato said: *Our preference is that RMOs pay directly and then seek reimbursement. Nevertheless, currently we do process payments direct to the training provider at the request of the trainee; however, this is on a discretionary basis, and is primarily reserved for instances where a trainee may have difficulty paying the expense direct. We anticipate continuing with this practice going forward; however, it is important to note that payments direct to the training provider are not a right that an RMO can expect.*

We would request you remind your members to allow between four - eight weeks for any possible delays if they are requesting Waikato DHB to directly pay the cost of conferences, examinations, or courses directly rather than seeking reimbursement.

Otherwise, in the instances of reimbursement, we endeavour to process all reimbursements within three weeks of receipt, contingent on all necessary documentation being provided to allow processing to occur and the proximity of the claim to the normal fortnight salary payment. In some instances, if payment is received either at a peak processing period or at times of high leave, such as Christmas, we may operate outside the three week time frame.

Lakes said: *Yes we would be more than happy to assist the RMOs by paying invoices directly to the training provider. The timeliness of this would be dependent on the RMO bringing the invoice to the MMU as soon as it is received. We sign off all invoices and claims for payment on a daily basis and the finance department will action payment within 7 days, so we do not see this as an issue.*

Tairāwhiti said: *We have always had a provision to pay invoices for courses, exams etc. directly. They tell us that some “docs” are really organized and get sorted through accounts payable quickly, but those that do not get confirmed on courses until the last minute, may have to pay for it themselves and will get reimbursed. The benefits of being small are that on occasion, even with short notice they may be able to accommodate: just have a chat with Natalie in the RMO Unit.*

Taranaki have said: *Yes we can pay directly by a couple of methods depending on the urgency. We would hope that we would be given as much notice as possible so that we can pay within one of the two pay runs made each month by our Accounts Dept (usually the first Monday and 20th of the month).*

MidCentral said: *Our current system is reimbursement based and in the main works well. While it would be possible to have the DHB pay training providers directly I am not sure that our processes*

are robust enough to ensure payments would always be made to the training providers by the due date. There are several steps in the process that are outside of the control of the Medical Admin Unit and a delay in any one of these could result in the RMO missing out in meeting deadlines for enrolment etc. (This has occurred several times with SMOs planning to attend conferences and seeking direct payments.)

As you state, if registration for an exam was missed and the RMO was then forced to wait another year it would be stressful for everyone concerned. For this reason alone we would be reluctant to change the current system.

Hutt already have direct payment for indemnity, BPAC re-certification and have always offered direct payments for RMO who have asked us. The study/exam leave form asks whether they can do the accommodation and flight bookings as well but it's not mandatory.

Due to finance department systems direct one-off payments are often done by credit card within the individual services; given this structure a more uniform approach could impede the process and is therefore not advised. None the less they do two reimbursements runs each month; on the 5th and the 20th.

Capital and Coast said: *In terms of prepayment we currently do the following:*

- *Orbit travel provider through which we request all RMOs book flights and accommodation*
- *Bulk billing arrangement with BPAC*
- *Relocation costs*
- *One-off arrangements are set up when RMOs can't make the required payment / are experiencing hardship*

Unfortunately due to the risk of not being able to pay on time, we will not be offering/making permanent arrangements to prepay training providers yet. This will continue in one-off arrangements as described above.

Canterbury (West Coast) does pay travel, conference and accommodation costs directly in most instances, but not the annual membership fees, etc. The RMO unit would be very keen to pay these directly for the you especially since annual membership fees always seem to come around in January which they acknowledge must be quite difficult, particularly for registrars who have to transfer DHBs then deal with the costs of Christmas, etc., all at the same time.

However they also share our concern about the situation where there might be delay in payment and the implications of that and as a result believes the process of payment would have to be quite controlled. They are in discussion with their accounts department about assurances that there would be no delays in payment. They will let us know where they get to.

Southern (Dunedin) said *we pay direct on the following:*

- *Travel and accommodation*
- *BPAC*
- *Relocations via Crown which is our preferred provider*
- *On a few occasions we have paid direct when a RMO can't make a payment as they are experiencing hardship*
- *I think in the past Radiology has paid the College fees direct but this is the only service in the hospital that does.*

We would be very hesitant about paying exam and course fees direct, especially if there are some fairly stringent deadlines, as we can't guarantee we will be able to make the payment on time. We would rather the RMO takes control of these so they know for certain the payments have been made etc.