

3 February 2010

Chris Crane
Project Manager
Otago DHB
Private Bag 1921
Dunedin 9054

Dear Chris

Bridging the Gap

The NZMA is New Zealand's largest medical organisation and has a pan professional membership. We have around 4500 members who come from all areas of medicine including medical students, resident medical officers, general practitioners, and other specialists.


We are concerned that the proposal is being considered as a regional and local issue, and that consultation is occurring in a similar light. In our view the issues discussed are matters that should be debated nationally and the consultation accordingly directed at that level. The NZMA has long been of the view that there should be greater national consistency in respect of health policy and a change of this nature made by the Otago/Southland DHBs will result in "postcode" health inequities. Before this matter is taken any further we ask that the matter be put before the National Health Board for consideration in respect of all District Health Boards.

However we have the following general comments on the proposal:

- There is a natural - and healthy - symbiotic relationship between the public and the private health systems and the NZMA supports greater use of that relationship. Having said that, any policy changes must not compromise the public health system.
- Patients who receive treatment on the public health system must be treated in the same way (and afforded the same rights) as those who choose to take up additional private services. Preferential public hospital treatment to those who can pay for "extras" is not acceptable.
- Any system put in place needs to be completely transparent so that the public may be assured that all patients are treated equally.
- There are some obvious examples where the private sector could play a role. Oncology for example could benefit from this whereby patients privately access medication not available on the public system but have the medicine administered through the public system.

We are happy to discuss any of the above matters further with you should you wish.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Foley', written in a cursive style.

Dr Peter Foley
Chair