

30 September 2011

Laboratory Service Consultation
Planning and Funding
PO Box 1600
Christchurch

By email: labsconsult@ccnweb.org.nz

Christchurch Laboratory Service Level Alliance Report: A Whole of System Approach to Laboratory Services

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

The New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) is New Zealand's largest medical organisation and has a pan professional membership. We have 5,000 members who come from all areas of medicine including medical students, resident medical officers, general practitioners, and other specialists.

The NZMA aims to provide leadership of the medical profession, and promote:

- professional unity and values, and
- the health of all New Zealanders.

The key roles of the NZMA are to:

- provide advocacy on behalf of doctors and their patients
- provide support and services to members and their practices
- publish and maintain the Code of Ethics for the profession
- publish the New Zealand Medical Journal.

The NZMA is of the view that any changes to laboratory services, in Christchurch or elsewhere, should ideally be within the context of a national framework to ensure national consistency and provide the laboratory providers with some certainty regarding the environment within which they operate.

The NZMA is also concerned about transitional issues that arise when an existing provider of laboratory services is replaced by a new entrant to the market. Transitional requirements and challenges must be a key factor in the decision making process and the inherent risks of moving to a single service provider must be recognised and addressed as part of the process.

While there may be cost savings in a sole tender approach, it can create vulnerabilities should the single provider fail to deliver. While operational performance can to a degree be addressed via contractual provisions, some situations may be outside the provider's control and we note that the capacity of the two current providers was vital during the Christchurch earthquake response earlier this year.

Finally, the NZMA is also of the view that consideration should be given to the utilisation of general practices when determining 'sample collection points'. There are already a moderately well distributed number of potential 'sample collection points' in place, all of whom are already collecting swabs and urine samples, and many of whom are collecting bloods (i.e. general practices). We believe some thought needs to be given to supporting this with an appropriate collection fee (for the bloods) rather than building new 'sample collection points'.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Peterson', written in a cursive style.

Dr Mark Peterson
NZMA Deputy Chair