

2 December 2013

Emeritus Professor Charlotte Paul
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Draft report to the New Zealand blood service: behavioural donor deferral criteria review

Dear Professor Paul

The New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the review of behavioural donor referral criteria undertaken for the New Zealand Blood Service.

The NZMA is the country's largest voluntary pan-professional medical organisation with approximately 5,000 members. Our members come from all disciplines within the medical profession and include general practitioners, doctors-in-training, specialists, and medical students. The NZMA aims to provide leadership of the medical profession, and promote professional unity and values, and the health of New Zealanders.

We understand that the review group recommends that the deferral periods for men who have sex with men (MSM), heterosexuals from countries with high prevalence of HIV, and all sex workers be changed from 5 years to 12 months, on the basis of the evaluation of current evidence around risk.

While we are not in a position to comment on the specific clinical evidence in the consultation, the NZMA has every confidence in the expertise of the review group. We acknowledge the detailed consideration the group has given to recent advances in donation testing and handling, new modelling studies, and the reported experience of Australia which has had a 12 month donor

deferral for more than 10 years and no identified transmissions of HIV or other relevant transfusion transmissible infections.

Accordingly, the NZMA wishes to extend its support to the NZ Blood Service for the proposed changes to the donor deferral criteria made by the review group. We look forward to the publication of the final report.

We hope our feedback on this consultation is helpful.

Yours sincerely

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

Dr Mark Peterson
NZMA Chair