



Media Release

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Aucklanders react strongly to Health Minister's reassurances

DontRiskOurHealth.com founder Matt Crockett says that Aucklanders have reacted strongly on the website forum to reassurances from Health Minister Pete Hodgson. Aucklanders agree with the Medical Association and College of Pathologists that the crisis is here now, and the Government needs to act before it's too late.

The Minister admitted the changes were unsettling, and could only reassure Auckland that it would be a satisfactory outcome if it was done well. The Minister has said it is up to the workers to decide if they want to work for the new company. "Loud and clear," says Crockett "pathologists and lab workers have said that they do not want to work for the new provider. Why is the minister not listening?"

100,000 Aucklanders signed a petition calling for a review of the Auckland community laboratory decision. "Satisfactory is not enough," says Crockett "the public is calling for the government to step in, and protect the world class community laboratory that serves Auckland today, before it is shut down."

Members of the public have criticised the minister and question how informed he is about this issue when he cannot even recall the length of the new contract. "We're not talking about a broken fingernail here," says Crockett "people's careers are being thrust into complete uncertainty. These highly skilled knowledge workers face the prospect of uprooting their families and leaving New Zealand to work overseas where they are clearly more valued."

The minister said that savings could be put into more operations. These purported savings are paper based, and will likely serve simply to reduce DHB deficits. This is money being siphoned straight out of primary health. When the system fails, which all the expert groups are predicting it will, the tax payer will spend many times those "savings" picking up the pieces with the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff.

The Pathologist's College, ASMS, NZMA, College of GPs and the World Health Organisation have warned about this pending crisis in pathology, and yet the Minister wants to wait until he gets "bits of data together to try and get a shared truth on that".

"There are no second chances with this decision," says Crockett, "and Aucklanders will lose an organisation that has served them well for decades while the minister sits asleep at the wheel."

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