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Press Release – HNZ Voluntary Redundancies August 29 2024

The College of Nurses Aotearoa describes the announcement this week from Health NZ seeking expressions of interest for people on Individual Employment Agreements to consider voluntary redundancy as “a very concerning move.” It lacks a clear consultative process and will cause widespread distress across the services.

The roles of people working on individual employment agreements are many and varied. Within this potentially affected group will be clinical leaders, including nursing leadership roles and roles supporting policy and quality. The critical link between effective clinical leadership and patient outcomes is recognised and well researched. The removal of clinical leadership will impact on patient experience, length of stay and patient outcomes. The removal of leadership in quality will undermine patient outcomes and satisfaction.

The 2013 Francis report into NHS Mid Staffordshire outlines serious failings in patient care. This pattern is starting to emerge within health services provision in Aotearoa – in particular a strong relentless focus on fiscal imperatives to the detriment of quality and patient safety. The report notes the Board was attempting to make projected savings in staff reductions by adjusting staff mix and wages (volume 1, p93) – which is reflective of the current situation in Aotearoa.

Prioritising finances over quality of care and failing to put patients at the centre, led to a mismatch between resources allocated and the needs of the services to be delivered. This resulted in needless deaths, suffering and significant reputational damage.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-of-the-mid-staffordshire-nhs-foundation-trust-public-inquiry>

We implore that care be taken when making important decisions about vital leadership roles. In order to support the nursing and wider health workforce to continue to deliver high quality and safe care to the people of Aotearoa, it is imperative that these sweeping reforms are given more time and genuine consideration. Thought must be given to the benefit of short term financial gain over long term health care delivery achieving Pae Ora, patient and staff safety, and a robust engaged workforce.

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