



ASSOCIATION OF SALARIED MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

TOI MATA HAUORA

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GOVERNMENT FAILS – AGAIN – TO INVEST IN HEALTH WORKFORCE TO DELIVER HEALTH CARE NEEDED

“The Government has failed, yet again, to use its Budget to invest in the health workforce which is the prime source of maintaining and improving the quality of patient care. This leaves hospital specialists to wonder what services might be compromised or even have to go,” says Ian Powell, Executive Director of the Association of Salaried Medical Specialists (ASMS).

“In particular, New Zealand has a worsening shortage of hospital specialists that official vacancy data ignores. This increasingly risky situation has become both entrenched and the norm. Too many specialists are overworked and overstretched. There is a limit to the extent this overworked horse can be flogged.

“Hospital specialists are critical to innovation and problem solving, including more effective spending of the health dollar. They are punching well above their weight. But if we didn’t have entrenched shortages the quality, safety and cost effectiveness of public hospital services would be significantly improved.”

Mr Powell was responding to the Government’s announcement that Vote Health is to receive \$14,765 million this year in operational funding, which is well short of what is needed.

Based on a pre-Budget analysis of health funding by the Council of Trade Unions, with ASMS input, and taking into account the announced new initiatives, our initial assessment is that the operational budget is around \$260 million short of what is needed. The full pre-budget analysis can be read at <http://union.org.nz/sites/union.org.nz/files/How-much-funding-is-needed-to-avoid-the-condition-of-the-Health-System-worsening-2015.pdf>

“It is recognised internationally that investing in health is good for the economy of countries like New Zealand. Sadly today’s Budget announcement fails badly to accept this,” says Mr Powell.

Today's Budget announcement means the Government's core health spending is continuing to fall as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP). If this year's Health Vote had matched the proportion of GDP that it did in 2009/10, it would have received an estimated \$1.2 billion more, based on Treasury's forecast GDP for 2015/16.

"There are obviously some good things included in this year's Budget, and we welcome them, but the level of funding provided isn't one of them."

ENDS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Powell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ian Powell
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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