

Hon Tony Ryall

Minister of Health



28 March 2011

Speech notes

Kiwi health jobs dot com launch, Wellington Hospital

Monday 28 March 3:30 pm

Thank you for inviting me to launch Kiwi-health-jobs-dot-com.

Christchurch

Before we talk about the kiwi health jobs website, I would like to reiterate my appreciation and thanks to everyone in the health service – both public and private – who's pitched in and supported Christchurch colleagues since last month's earthquake.

The challenge in Canterbury is ongoing. Our health professionals there will need a break from time to time. So, the many hundreds of offers to help in Christchurch will still be needed.

More doctors and nurses

Meeting the health workforce challenge we inherited is a major objective for the government. We're making good progress. Since November 2008, the public health service now has over 500 extra doctors and well over 1,000 extra nurses. There are more doctors and nurses employed in the public health service than ever before. Staff vacancy rates are the lowest they have ever been. But there are still key areas of shortage that make our health services vulnerable.

One stop shop

Today we're here to launch what I am told it is the most comprehensive site in New Zealand for job vacancies in the public health service.

District Health Boards and the New Zealand Blood Service have worked together to develop this internet-based service.

Kiwihealthjobs.com is a significant first step towards a "one-stop-shop" for health sector recruitment.

New Zealand's public health sector has not had a single comprehensive site where health professionals seeking new jobs can go.

Multiple brands, websites, and competing interests have, in previous times, held back

on such an opportunity to promote an efficient and unified “NZ Inc” approach.

New Zealand health organisations will be able to post clinical and non clinical job vacancies on a single site for potential candidates – both national and international.

As I said this is a great first step in achieving a comprehensive candidate-focused “front door” to working in Health in New Zealand. I will talk a little later about the future development of this site.

Recruiting and retaining staff

New Zealand faces significant challenges as we build our health service for the future. We have an aging population, growing demand and competition from overseas for our doctors and nurses.

New Zealand has historically relied on overseas trained doctors and nurses more than any other country in the OECD and these professionals are very mobile.

We are grateful and pleased to have international health professionals come here to settle and work.

We have taken significant steps to grow and retain our home-grown workforce.

We are educating more doctors – with a five year track to lift medical school places from 365 to 565.

We have targeted some of the hard to staff specialties through the voluntary bonding scheme.

It offers payments against graduates student loans or cash incentives for those that do not have a loan for three to five years.

We have also sought to retain our health professionals through providing more opportunities for clinical leadership , research and teaching. We are modernising more of our technical equipment.

We have also cut taxes to reward hard-work and make New Zealand more competitive. These see an average hospital specialist benefiting by \$7,000 per year in the hand. And nurses pay less tax too.

We will continue to welcome overseas health professionals here to New Zealand.

International opportunities

As you know the global financial crisis is having a dramatic impact on public health services in many countries. Budgets are being reduced and jobs lost.

There are a couple of factors that will add to the flow of international health professionals around the globe.

One is the significant financial and restructuring pressures in Britain’s National Health Service.

It is estimated 50,000 of the 1.4m staff in NHS will be made redundant over the next

few years.

Already there are reports of cutbacks of almost 1,000 jobs in two London hospitals alone – including significant numbers of nurses and doctors. Many of these professionals will seek to leave Britain, a traditional source of staff for us.

Second, a bow wave of medical graduates in Australia is about to find there are not enough jobs for them in Australian hospitals.

This year we are employing 20 or so first year Australian medical graduates in New Zealand and many of the surplus Australians may look to New Zealand in the future.

However, as I said earlier, we are increasing our own graduate numbers and will assure those young people of positions here in New Zealand.

Just as we have more doctors and nurses working here now, we also have more allied health staff.

And there are more general practitioners working in primary care than at any other time.

Latest Medical Council workforce data confirms this, as does membership of the Royal College of GPs.

Retaining our workforce remains a major priority for the Government.

The Future

I congratulate the DHBs and New Zealand Blood Service for this initiative. This is a great first step as we move to better integrate and standardise the way we recruit staff throughout the health service.

Across DHBs the training function is becoming more regionalised through four new training hubs. And so will staff recruitment and support over the next while.

I expect recruitment will become even more *candidate-centric* by making it even easier for health professionals to use kiwi-health-jobs in the near future ... where candidates won't have to apply for jobs across multiple employers, multiple different procedures and multiple systems to navigate.

I envisage this portal will become an important support for our collaborative international recruitment campaigns.

Thank you and congratulations to all who have been involved in this project and best wishes for the future.

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