

DOREVITCH PATHOLOGY & GIPPSLAND PATHOLOGY ATTEMPTS TO LOCK OUT SCIENTISTS & TECHNICIANS

COMPANY TAKES UNPROTECTED ACTION SCIENTISTS TO PICKET AT FRANKSTON HOSPITAL TUESDAY 8 DEC '09

In a move likely to inflame the situation rather than to settle the dispute over wages and terms and conditions of employment, the Union has been advised that Specialist Diagnostic Services Pty Ltd trading as Dorevitch Pathology will be locking out scientists and technicians until 22.00 hrs on Thursday 9 December 2009. This is in response to the scientists and technicians going on strike last week.

However, the company's purported lock out is NOT protected action under the Fair Work Act, as Specialist Diagnostic Services Pty Ltd is NOT the employer of the scientists.

This much was established in Fair Work Australia last Friday, a few hours before the Union was served with the lock out notice. The company's own representatives were forced to concede in FWA that the employer of the scientists is Symbion Health Limited. No scientist employed by Specialist Diagnostic Services Pty Ltd has been taking industrial action.

Meanwhile management is breaching the Private Pathology Award* by rostering remaining scientists on double shifts, which is likely to jeopardise the quality of results, as well as being a health and safety issue. We understand that the working of double shifts is happening at Frankston Hospital, on the Mornington Peninsular, the largest public hospital in the region. We understand that this is happening in the blood bank which provides blood for surgery. Errors in cross matching blood can be fatal.

Scientists will be on a picket line outside the main entrance to Frankston Hospital tomorrow Tuesday 8 December 2009 from 10.00 am – 12.00 noon. Scientists will be coming from across Gippsland, Ballarat and Heidelberg to support their colleagues the Frankston laboratory of Dorevitch Pathology. (The pathology service at Frankston Hospital was privatised in the 1990s.)

“Scientists are angry that their employer is refusing to pay them market rates, refusing to talk and now is purporting to lock them out” according to the Secretary of the Medical Scientists Association of Victoria, Dr Rosemary Kelly, “and they are also angry that the quality of pathology services, already being compromised by understaffing before this dispute blew up, is being put at risk. Management want to turn Dorevitch Pathology and Gippsland Pathology into low wage ghettos, a far cry from the high quality, high wage services that they used to be” she said.

Contact: Dr Rosemary Kelly 0418 543 683

*Under the award scientists are only able to be rostered on one shift a day, for up to 4 or 5 days, and a maximum of 50 ordinary hours per week.