

Media release

Senior doctors brand consultation over merger flawed

3 February 2010

Senior medical doctors from Southland Hospital today labelled consultation on a proposed merger between the Otago and Southland Hospital Boards flawed. 24 senior medical staff have signed an open letter to Paul Menzies, Chairman of the Southland District Health Board, calling for a new round of consultation on the plans, which were announced in November last year.

Dr Charles Luecker, spokesperson for the group, said today: "Senior doctors are united in the view that the consultation process undertaken by the District Health Board management is materially flawed. We believe that the limited response to the consultation does not represent support of the merger but rather confusion as to the real implications of the proposal, not only for Southland and Otago but for the whole of New Zealand."

He added: "The consultation has been rushed and inadequate given the large number of complex and significant issues which deserve more thorough and meaningful consideration."

Dr Luecker said a number of key issues need to be addressed including access to health services in Southland and the potential for reduced representation for Southland in health services decision making. "We are demanding assurances from both district health boards that the current level of health services at Southland Hospital will be maintained. We urge the Southland District Health Board to carry out more consultation before making a decision on the proposed merger. This is a matter of national significance given the likelihood that this model will be replicated across other regions and district health boards and deserves more detailed analysis.

Please see the attached letter.

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