

Cutting science services a false economy

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The Public Health Association (PHA) is deeply disappointed by the announcement today that 13 jobs are to go from the Environmental Health Group at ESR because cuts to essential services will result.

Environmental Health Group staff help control outbreaks of the flu, meningitis and other illnesses that communicate from one person to another.

PHA National Executive Officer Dr Gay Keating says the decision has presumably been made in line with government policy to cut backroom staff in order to afford more front line staff.

“The very purpose of these "backroom jobs" is to make sure most of us don't need front line help in the first place, so this will actually make things worse.

“Compared with other developed nations, New Zealand has an extremely high rate of avoidable hospital admissions, so cutting down on the Group's resources, including staff, is extremely unwise and puts everyone at increased risk.

“Every time someone gets sick from a preventable illness they take up an expensive hospital bed that could be used by someone on a waiting list.”

Dr Keating agrees efficiency and value for taxpayers' money are extremely important in health, but says any economist will tell you it's a mistake to save money by making cuts that increase the likelihood of people getting sick.

“That only guarantees front line staff will be even busier,” she said.

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