



16 October 2020

Professor Rathan Subramaniam
Dean
Otago Medical School
PO Box 56
DUNEDIN 9054
Via email: rathan.subramaniam@otago.ac.nz

Dear Professor Subramaniam

Kia ora koutou katoa.

I am writing as the President of the New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists (NZSA). The NZSA is a professional medical education society, which represents over 700 medical anaesthetists in New Zealand. We facilitate and promote education and research into anaesthesia and advocate on behalf of our members, and the safety of their patients.

We are aware of the current interest in the University of Otago Medical School's *Mirror on Society* preferential admissions programme. While the University has reached a settlement out of court, we understand that you are embarking on a review of the policy so we felt it was worthwhile to write to you to express our strong support for the policy. We would like to commend the University of Otago for its proactive approach to address New Zealand's widespread health inequities by increasing the diversity of your medical students; not only Māori and Pasifika, but also lower socio-economic, rural and refugee candidates.

As a specialist medical society, our members are the product of their time at institutions such as yours. Both their selection into medical school and the training they receive help shape and guide their attitudes towards their patients, patient's whānau and community.

Anaesthesia is a hospital based specialty that has a very homogenous profile, with a significantly low number of Fellows trained by the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists and working in New Zealand identifying as Māori. The number identifying as of Pacific Island background is even smaller.

We know there are distinct advantages when patients are treated by physicians who identify with their cultural background and experiences. We also believe that departments and hospitals benefit when a workforce has diverse backgrounds, cultural affiliations and life experiences, reflecting the community we live in. The only way that we, as a speciality can improve the number of our Māori and Pasifika Fellows is through attracting more of your students to study anaesthesia.

We acknowledge the efforts your institution has made to date in an attempt to increase the number of Māori and Pacific students that have been accepted into your medical programme since 2012.



The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists has written to you in support of your policy and the NZSA fully endorses their letter.

Thank you for your time, noho ora mai,

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathryn Hagen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Kathryn Hagen
NZSA President