Notice for Urban and Rural Primary Care,
Community Referrers, ARC Facilities & Midwives
Issued on 17 November 2026

Awanui Labs Canterbury service disruption due to industrial action

Thursday 19 November – Friday 20 November and Monday 23 – Tuesday 24 November (inclusive).

APEX Union have announced their members who work at Awanui Labs in the Northern, Central and South Island regions will take industrial action (strike) from **00:01 Thursday 19 November to 23:59 Friday 20 November 2026** (48 hours) and again from **00:01 Monday 23 November to 23:59 Tuesday 24 November 2026** (48 hours).

The strike is a full withdrawal of labour, which means APEX Union members who work in the laboratory, collection centres, and logistics and support staff (in some regions), will strike on these days.

Our priority is keeping our people and patients safe and maintaining essential laboratory services during the strike period.

Awanui respects the right of union members within our organisation to strike, and we understand these periods in the business can create a challenging environment.

We thank you for your continued understanding and support during this time.

Service changes in Canterbury

Laboratory services will be severely restricted from **00:01 Thursday 19 November to 23:59 Friday 20 November 2026** (48 hours) and again from **00:01 Monday 23 November to 23:59 Tuesday 24 November 2026** (48 hours).

What community referrers need to know

- Do not collect or send routine specimens during the industrial action period.
- Only clinically urgent tests will be accepted. Routine specimens sent to the laboratory may not be processed.
- Please do not hold samples to be collected and processed post-industrial action, where clinically appropriate please defer sample collection until usual laboratory service resumes.

Routine Awanui courier services: UNAVAILABLE
Your scheduled Awanui Courier pick up will not occur and drop boxes will not be cleared.
A courier service for Clinically Urgent samples will be available in Christchurch Metro areas between 0900 – 1600 each day. Please Call 03 359 0900 to arrange.

Notice for Urban and Rural Primary Care,
Community Referrers, ARC Facilities & Midwives
Issued on 17 November 2026

External courier services: External courier services in rural areas will continue, however we can only accept clinically urgent specimens. Please do not send any other routine samples to the laboratory during Industrial Action. Any samples received that are not clinically urgent may not be processed.

Other testing and clinics

Microbiology

Due to industrial action by APEX members, routine microbiology services across Awanui South Island laboratories will be disrupted from **Tuesday 17 - Tuesday 24 November (inclusive)**.

Non-urgent microbiology testing:

Non-urgent microbiology samples collected between Tuesday 17 and Tuesday 24 November (inclusive) will not be processed.

Please defer collection of non-urgent microbiology samples until routine services resume.

Urgent microbiology testing:

To ensure all **urgent** microbiology samples can be identified please ensure the request form is clearly marked as urgent and full supporting clinical details are provided.

Requests not meeting clinically urgent requirements may be declined.

Tests to be deferred to outside of these dates include requests for:

- Genital swabs for BV/Candida
- Skin/Wound swab culture
- Sputum culture
- Throat swab culture
- Urine microscopy/culture
- Faecal tests (all)
- Mycology (skin/nails for fungi)
- MRSA / MDRO Screens
- Seminal Fluid for fertility or post-vasectomy analysis
- Fine needle aspiration (FNA) testing

Important - Do not collect and hold samples

Please do NOT collect and store or hold samples during this period for sending to the lab once routine services resume. These samples will not be processed.

Please restrict requests where clinically appropriate. Turnaround times will be affected by the industrial action.

HPV swabs, cervical screening samples, Chlamydia and Histology samples can continue to be collected and sent to the laboratory; however, we ask requesters to defer collection where clinically appropriate.

Notice for Urban and Rural Primary Care,
Community Referrers, ARC Facilities & Midwives
Issued on 17 November 2026

Histology: For un-booked frozen sections, call the laboratory as usual to arrange an urgent courier pickup. Turnaround times will be affected by industrial action.

Collection centres – Clinically Urgent by Arrangement Only

Collection services will be limited to clinically urgent requests only – A critically urgent blood collection can be arranged by calling 03 359 0900.
Where clinically appropriate, please ask your patients to defer sample collection until after the Industrial action period

Christchurch Collection Centre	
Northfield	Clinically Urgent Only – by arrangement
All other Christchurch collection centres	CLOSED
Christchurch Home Visits	Clinically Urgent Only
Ashburton Collection Centre	
Ashburton	CLOSED
Ashburton Home Visits	Unavailable

***Please note Ashburton Collection Centre will also close at 1230pm Wednesday 18 November and reopen on Wednesday 25 November.**