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

Awanui Labs Queenstown 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 Queenstown

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

Critically urgent testing only

- Only critically urgent specimens will be accepted during the industrial action period.
- **Do not collect or send routine specimens** during this time.
- Routine specimens received by the laboratory may not be processed.
- Please do not collect and hold specimens for processing after the industrial action. Where clinically appropriate, defer specimen collection until normal services resume.

Courier services

Routine Awanui courier collections **– UNAVAILABLE**. Scheduled Awanui courier pickups will not operate on these dates.

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Urgent courier collections **– AVAILABLE** - An urgent courier service will be available for critically urgent specimens only, between **09:00 and 16:30**. To arrange an urgent pickup, please call **03 442 3875 (option 5)**.

External courier services: External courier services will continue to operate. However, only critically urgent specimens should be sent.

Do not place routine specimens in external courier bins, as they will not be processed.

Other laboratory services:

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

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.

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Other testing and clinics

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

The following services will not be available during the industrial action period:

- Allergy testing
- Venesection
- Paternity and DNA testing
- Fine needle aspiration (FNA) testing

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.

Collection centres - All Collection Centres and Home Visits will be unavailable on these dates.

Queenstown Collection Centres	
Frankton Collection Centre	Closed
Queenstown Medical Centre Collection Centre	Closed
Home Visits	Unavailable

We appreciate the disruption this may cause and thank you for your understanding and support during this period.