



20th June 2023

Press Release

The Ministry of Health wishes to further clarify its' position as advised through the recently issued memorandum addressing the "Outsourcing of ultrasound to private businesses".

The Ministry further wishes to advise that the Ultrasound department is an understaffed unit within the Medical Imaging & Radiology Department (Ofisa o Fa'ata) at TTM Hospital, with currently only one senior technician and a trainee in employment. Another senior staff member is currently away on further studies in Fiji, whilst others who have been trained in this field have resigned and/or moved to private practice in Samoa.

To compound matters, there is a shortage of funded training opportunities to study Ultrasound and Radiology in regional tertiary institutions, with no local tertiary institution currently able to offer training for Radiographers or Sonographers (technicians who conduct ultrasounds scans). For an effective service delivery, there should be at least six (6) sonographers based on the increasing demand, along with at least three (3) Radiologists - specialist doctors who interpret x-rays, CT scans and ultrasound.

The Ministry believes in transparency and in offering the general public accessibility options, rather than having patients waiting for a period of up to 6 weeks for non-urgent ultrasound scan appointment.

With the availability of at least three (3) private Ultrasound Clinics in Samoa, the Ministry is confident it can now share its' patient load through off-setting any potential patient backlog to the private sector, thus ensuring accessibility of all Samoans to these specific diagnostic services .

The temporary measure of diverting non-urgent ultrasound requests to private practice will also allow the Medical Imaging & Radiology Department to apply its' focus and limited resources on emergencies, urgent and the investigation of in-patient (hospital admitted) cases. It also allows non-urgent ultrasound cases to be done and reported early instead of waiting in the queue that is now up to 6weeks long.

Ma le ava tele,

Auliaimalae Tagaloa Dr. Robert Thomsen

ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL OF HEALTH – MINISTRY OF HEALTH

