Dunedin (Friday 5 July): Mayor Dave Cull is questioning the need for hospital kitchen services in the South Island to be centralised in Christchurch.

In April, the Minister of Health Tony Ryall announced a plan to concentrate food services within two or more major new kitchens to provide food services across the country. The move will include the downsizing of existing kitchens in both the North and South Islands as part of a cost savings drive.

Mayor Cull says while the Dunedin City Council has been unable to confirm any details of the proposal he understands that options in both islands include both single and dual provision, and that provision out of both Auckland and Wellington is being considered for the North Island.

In a letter to the Minister, Mayor Cull has asked for a dual provision of services in the South Island to be provided in a similar way to that being considered for the North Island.

“Dunedin Hospital already achieves efficiencies by providing a centralised service for the Southern District Health Region. It can do that, in large part, because significant investment has gone into the Dunedin Hospital kitchens over the past few years.

“Clearly, one of the lessons of the Canterbury earthquakes was the need for distributed services and even a degree of redundancy in infrastructural and service capacity in the anticipation of a disaster or like event. In fact most of the South Island suffered shortages of various food and grocery products after the Canterbury events because distribution was concentrated out of Christchurch. “

Mayor Cull says the Dunedin City Council would be happy to work through any issues with the Minister but that a disestablishment of hospital kitchen services in Dunedin would be a retrograde step that would put the entire South Island at risk.

“A more resilient model would involve both Christchurch and Dunedin continuing to provide services.”

Government owned agency Health Benefits Limited (HBL) is currently consulting with unions on a proposal to streamline district health board food services.

Contact details: Dunedin Mayor Dave Cull – 027 434 6917.
24 June 2013

Hon Tony Ryall  
Minister of Health  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

Dear Minister Ryall

I am aware the Ministry of Health is considering centralising hospital kitchen services in both the North and South Islands. I understand that the aim is to achieve cost savings and greater efficiencies.

Dunedin Hospital already achieves efficiencies by providing a centralised service for the Southern District Health Region. It can do that, in large part, because significant investment has gone into the Dunedin Hospital kitchens over the past few years.

While Council has been unable to confirm any details of the proposal with your Ministry, I understand that the options in both islands include both single and dual provision, and that provision out of both Auckland and Wellington is being considered for the North Island.

Clearly, one of the lessons of the Canterbury earthquakes was the need for distributed services and even a degree of redundancy in infrastructural and service capacity in the anticipation of a disaster or like event. Indeed, most of the South Island suffered shortages of various food and grocery products after the Canterbury events because distribution was concentrated out of Christchurch.

Concentration of South Island kitchen services in one place could have similar negative effects. Hence I suggest that disestablishment of hospital kitchen services in Dunedin would be a retrograde step that would put the entire South Island at risk. A more resilient model would involve both Christchurch and Dunedin continuing to provide services.

The Dunedin City Council would be happy to work through the above issues with you and your officials should that assist the investigation currently being undertaken.

Yours sincerely

Dave Cull
Mayor of Dunedin