

2023 South Pacific Congress welcome and opening speech Her Excellency, Dame Cindy Kiro, Governor General of New Zealand

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Rau rangatira mā, e kui mā, e koro mā, e huihui nei, tēnei aku mihi māhana ki a koutou. Kia ora tātou katoa.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging: Joe Harawira, Kaumātua; Puhiwāhine Tibble, Kuia; Terry Taylor, President of the New Zealand Institute of Laboratory Science, and Mary-Ann Janssen, Vice-President; Sharon Tozer, Executive Officer; Sarah Just, CEO of the Australian Institute of Medical and Clinical Scientists; Tony Barnett, Secretary Treasurer.

Tēnā koutou katoa.

I'm delighted to be here to open the New Zealand Institute of Medical Laboratory Science South Pacific Congress for 2023, and to welcome medical and clinical scientists from across New Zealand, Australia, and the Pacific to Auckland for this very special event.

The Covid-19 pandemic emphasised just how important medical laboratory scientists and technicians are to our healthcare system. The work of such highly skilled and dedicated professionals, in our laboratories and testing stations, played a vital role in how we were able to respond to the outbreak of the virus.

I know that throughout each new and unknown phase of the pandemic – and, in particular, throughout the Omicron outbreak – the strain on laboratories processing PCR tests was immense and unrelenting.

However, without those test results, we would have lost a vital tool in protecting ourselves and each other from the spread of the virus – and even more lives would certainly have been lost.

I also know, during those periods, the huge strain that was placed on laboratories and their staff – doing work that was so important, but so often unacknowledged – while also under such



The Rt Hon. Governor General, Dame Cindy Kiro delivering her speech to the SPC23 delegates



The official party (L-R): Puhiwāhine Tibble, Kuia; Mary-Ann Janssen, NZIMLS (past) Vice President; Sarah Just, AIMS CEO; Dame Cindy Kiro, Governor General, Terry Taylor, NZIMLS (Past) President; Tony Barnett, NZIMLS President; Joe Harawira, Kaumātua, Sharon Tozer, NZIMLS Executive Officer

immense and ongoing public scrutiny.

I'd like to read out a passage from one of the New Zealand Institute of Medical Laboratory Science's press releases, from 1st September 2021:

'In the early hours of this morning, in a diagnostic medical laboratory somewhere in New Zealand, the three-millionth PCR test will be performed with no fuss or celebration. That medical laboratory scientist will finish their shift ... and head out the door past the other more visible health professionals on their way home. They will watch and listen as news outlets question why it should take so long for an individual test result to come back – and experts demand more testing speed and effort ...'

I want to take this opportunity to thank you – on behalf of all New Zealanders – for your immense work over the past three years to help keep us all safe, on top of the hugely important work you already do to help diagnose and treat those fighting illnesses across New Zealand, Australia, and the Pacific.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge Terry Taylor – our CEO here in New Zealand – for being such a staunch advocate for medical laboratory scientists across the country. I know that this continues to be a difficult period for the profession – and I know how hard you work to advocate on behalf of those in this room and throughout New Zealand.

In my role as Governor-General, I often have the great privilege of meeting New Zealanders, in communities across the country, who do extraordinary things in the services of others.

One of the most common things I've noticed about such people is that they are motivated, not by the promise of any kind of reward or recognition, but by the belief in what they're doing, and the knowledge of the good that comes in helping others. And that seems to me the case with those in this room. My sincere thanks once again for your outstanding dedication and sense of duty.

The theme for this congress is *Sailing into the Future*. I wish all here in attendance, a rich and rewarding time over these next few days – and all the very best for your future. It brings me great pleasure to declare this Congress open.

Kia ora huihui tātou katoa.



Dame Cindy Kiro and NZIMLS (Immediate Past) President, Terry Taylor



Ailsa Bunker, Middlemore Hospital receives her Life Membership from Dame Cindy Kiro