

## Laboratory accreditation standard updated

### **NZS/ISO/IEC 17025:2005 now published**

The generic accreditation criteria for all laboratories except medical testing laboratories, NZS/ISO/IEC 17025:1999 has undergone a revision to align it with ISO 9001:2000. In May this year, the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) published the 2005 edition: ISO/IEC 17025:2005 *General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories*. In October, this standard was adopted by Standards New Zealand as a New Zealand standard and which IANZ will now use as the general criteria for accrediting laboratories.

IANZ will be posting copies of the new criteria to all accredited and applicant laboratories in November, along with a detailed explanation of the changes. Laboratories have until 1 June 2007 to demonstrate their conformity to the new standard.

### **Changes are minimal**

The changes and up-dates are not substantial and should have only minimal impact on the operation of accredited laboratories in terms of their conformity with the ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation standard. The added and amended clauses deal primarily with how laboratory management ensures effective communication and how the effectiveness of the management system is continually improved. This is reflected in the majority of changes being in the Management Requirements section (Section 4) of the standard. There are also some additions to the Technical Requirements (Section 5).

Throughout the new standard any references to “quality system”, “client”, and “conformance” have been replaced by “management system”, “customer”, and “conformity” respectively. These subtle changes in terminology to align with current ISO conventions are not expected to be changed immediately in the documentation of existing quality (management) systems. They should, however, be addressed as the relevant procedures are reviewed and up-dated as part of an accredited laboratory’s routine review process.

### **Assessment to start immediately**

Soon after the standard is available, IANZ assessment teams will commence assessment of laboratories against the requirements of the new standard. This applies to both currently accredited laboratories at their next scheduled annual surveillance visit or routine reassessment and to applicant laboratories at their initial assessment. As the changes are expected to be minimal, accredited laboratories will be given the usual period (generally 3 months) to clear any Corrective Action Requests from the Assessment Report that relate to the implementation of the new requirements. Longer periods may be negotiated on a case-by-case basis in exceptional circumstances, but laboratories are reminded that all accredited laboratories must demonstrate conformity by the 1 June 2007 deadline.