



Welcome to the April edition of The Argus. In this issue, we look at the new lab testing standard, the first inspection body in New Zealand to be accredited to inspect for methamphetamine contamination, updates to drinking water standards and technical issues relating to the health sector.

1. IANZ and Standards NZ partnership fast-tracks lab testing standards

The new 17025 laboratory accreditation standard was published in March and, thanks to an agreement between IANZ and Standards NZ, IANZ clients can access the standard for free. All you have to do is contact IANZ to be given a user name and password, then you can go to the Standards NZ site and download a copy of the standard for your use.

This laboratory standard is used globally and is a pre-requisite for many regulators and industry bodies, who require products to be tested in an accredited laboratory before they will allow or approve those products for their domestic market. More than 50% of New Zealand's exports are required to be tested in accredited laboratories as a condition of access to overseas markets.

The NZ version of the updated standard was developed using a faster, streamlined approach which saw it successfully adopted in three and a half months from the date of its publication, which included an eight-week public consultation period.

Standards NZ hopes to establish an identical fast track approach as its usual process for the adoption of international standards going forward.



Officially called NZS ISO/IEC 17025:2018, the standard specifies the general requirements for the competence, impartiality and consistent operation of laboratories. The standard applies to all organisations performing laboratory activities, regardless of the number of workers.

Laboratory customers, regulatory authorities, organisations and schemes using peer-assessment, accreditation bodies, and other organisations use the standard to confirm and or recognise the competence of laboratories.

IANZ uses the standard as the general criteria for testing and calibration laboratory accreditation. This doesn't include medical testing laboratories, which are accredited to NZS/ISO 15189:2007 *Medical laboratories – Particular requirements for quality and competence*.

2. Hawkes Bay company first inspection body to be accredited for meth testing

IANZ recently granted official approval to the first inspection body in New Zealand accredited to do inspection and sampling for methamphetamine contamination under new rules that came into effect last year.

In 2017, Standards New Zealand published a new standard on the testing and decontamination of meth-affected properties (NZS8510) which required both rigorous validation of sampling kits and appropriately trained samplers.

In March, Hawkes Bay-based company Drug Smart became the first inspection body to be accredited under that Standard. It provides meth testing along the East Coast and lower North Island for the likes of national government organisations, insurance companies and loss adjusters, as well as property management companies and individual property owners.



Director Sam Murdoch says the IANZ assessment process was very thorough and Drug Smart was proud to be the first inspection body in New Zealand to gain the accreditation.

“It was good to be scrutinised in such a way because, now we've got the IANZ accreditation, it gives assurance to our clients they are in safe hands. Given the clientele we have, it is definitely a bonus for us to have IANZ on our reports and our website.”

His company tests between 50 and 100 properties each month for meth contamination.

IANZ's general manager of accreditation services Phil Barnes says the new standard requires complete independence between the test providers and the cleaning companies. In the past, conflict of interest problems arose with the same companies doing both. “Some property owners ended up spending a small fortune, sometimes tens of thousands of dollars, on decontamination that wasn't actually necessary.”

“Now, for a company to claim compliance with the Standard and gain accreditation, they have to demonstrate to IANZ that their meth testing samplers have appropriate training and competence and that their testing process is proven to be reliable.”

Before a property owner makes any decision on decontamination work, the Standard now requires a detailed assessment by an IANZ-accredited organisation to determine how bad the contamination is, and whether it is above acceptable levels. After decontamination, another

detailed assessment is also required by an IANZ-accredited organisation. Assuming the contamination is then below the acceptable level, the cleaning company is able to produce a clearance certificate.

“Using IANZ-accredited laboratories and inspection bodies provides confidence the organisations are fully independent, use competent people and technically reliable methods,” says Barnes. “IANZ accreditation also means accredited organisations keep good records and have effective monitoring and complaint management systems.

“Drug Smart were meticulous in their responses to the in-depth assessment process and we’re very pleased to have granted them the first inspection body meth testing accreditation in New Zealand.”

NZS8510 is not mandatory but property owners should demand services that comply with the standard if they want reliable and impartial information to minimise any decontamination work that may be needed, says IANZ.

3. IANZ working with Ministry of Health on drinking water standards

As a result of the Havelock North water enquiry, IANZ has been working closely with the Ministry of Health to update the accreditation criteria associated with drinking water standards.

The process is well underway and IANZ has already updated its criteria. It is expected that the sampling of drinking water will also come under the accreditation umbrella in the future as this was one of the firm conclusions of the enquiry.

IANZ CEO Dr Llew Richards says there are basically two options for how that is done - either IANZ accredits the lab to do the sampling or it could accredit samplers independently, with the water companies offering training.



4. Helping create a fit-for-purpose health sector

IANZ is continuing to work with the Ministry of Health on technical issues affecting the health sector. To gain IANZ accreditation, it’s imperative health organisations have access to competent staff and adequate equipment and accommodation.

Given many of the district health board premises are ageing, it is a challenge for them to upgrade their facilities.

IANZ’s general manager of accreditation services Phil Barnes, who has a long history in the health sector, says IANZ is working very closely with a number of hospital labs which have been identified as needing significant upgrades to their facilities.



He says one option that has worked well recently is the combination of private labs working in the public sector. Good examples of this included Waikato, the Kapiti Coast, Wellington and Masterton.

“There’s been very good integration of public and private medical testing services in those areas and the benefits include the DHB only having to pay for one lab, rather than two. Wellington Hospital, for example, now has a new purpose-built lab.”

IANZ is also working with the Ministry of Health on other new accreditation initiatives outside the current lab testing and radiology activities.

In other related news, IANZ is also working with the Ministry of Justice on standards and accreditation for the proposed new national mortuary body storage service. At the moment, the rules are not well defined about the storage of dead bodies albeit with DHBs and private sector undertakers doing much of this work.

Consequently, IANZ and the MOJ are looking to introduce accreditation criteria which could see national providers or regional providers established for the storage of bodies and forensic mortuary services. Further details will be announced in due course.