

Reps raise short staffing issues with Minister

5 November 2019



Taking it to the top: Wellington reps joined around 150 other union members at a recent Council of Trade Unions/Government Forum at Parliament. Left to right: Emmaleen Bowman, Jessica Maxwell and Diana Griffin.

MERAS reps took the opportunity at the CTU-Government Forum held in Parliament to ask Minister of Health David Clark what he is doing to address chronic staffing shortages of DHB-employed midwives.

The Minister pointed to progress in the recruitment of midwives as a result of the \$38 million in additional funding committed through the NZNO Accord.

MERAS has subsequently asked the Ministry of Health to look into recruitment figures the Minister has been quoting. The latest update from the Safe Staffing Healthy Workplaces Governance Group is reporting only 27 FTE midwives as having been recruited as a result of the additional funding. Caroline Conroy represents MERAS on the SSHW Governance Group.

MERAS reps have been raising the visibility of midwives at forums the CTU has been running with Ministers and MPs around the country.

The next Forum is being held from 5-8pm, Tuesday 26 November, at the Ellerslie Events Centre in Auckland. Please email jill.ovens@meras.co.nz if you are interested in attending.

Midwifery championed in Pay Equity interviews

Midwives have been passionately outlining the work they do in more than 30 interviews across eight DHBs. Core midwives and charge midwives have been interviewed, mainly in pairs so they could bounce their input off each other.

Interviews with lactation consultants, diabetes, high risk and MFM midwives at Auckland and Counties Manukau DHBs will be conducted by the end of November.

A team of MERAS and DHB interviewers have been capturing the key knowledge, skills and responsibilities of the midwives' role to compare with interviews that will be held with those in similar male-dominated or historically male-dominated professions.

One of the MERAS interviewers Victoria Christian said all the midwives were very well prepared and provided lots of good examples of the wide variety of situations midwives encounter.

"One that particularly stuck out exemplified the importance of midwives when it comes to caring for women who choose not to engage with medical professionals, but will engage with midwifery care," she said.

Victoria also noted that it was fascinating to see the differences between DHBs, for example with staffing issues. One of the factors being considered is working conditions.

The interview material is being compiled into summary profiles, which will provide the evidence of undervaluation and therefore underpayment due to gender discrimination that we need for the final stage of bargaining a pay equity settlement.

The oversight group is meeting on Wednesday 27 November to identify potential comparators.

The next step is for TAS to approach the employers in the proposed comparators' occupations to get their agreement to proceed with interviews using the same tools as were used in the midwives' interviews. We hope to get these interviews lined up for early 2020.

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