

## Clean, green and Covid-free, this is the place to be

As we collectively breathe a sigh of relief with 28 days of Covid-free Aotearoa, MERAS is encouraging DHBs, through the Midwifery Accord, to actively recruit Kiwi midwives to come back home from Australia and the UK. We may not be as “clean and green” as we would like, but there is no denying we are Covid-free!

At the same time, at 28 days Covid-free, this is a good time to acknowledge the effort and sacrifices you made as midwives. You went to great lengths to ensure the safety of women in maternity facilities with extra cleaning, screening, social distancing (including from each other) and putting in place special containment areas for women who had been exposed to Covid.

If you cancelled Annual Leave during the lockdown, now is the time to plan regular leave from work for the rest of the year and enjoy a well-earned break. Don’t under-estimate the leave that you have available to you. As midwives you accumulate leave quite quickly which includes:

- 4 or 5 weeks annual leave per year, depending on how long you have worked as a midwife
- Up to 10 days Public Holiday lieu days per year
- Up to 5 days shift leave per year
- One weeks ‘long service leave’ every 5 years

This means you could plan one week’s leave every 6 to 7 weeks, taking a break to explore your local area, visit friends or travel New Zealand and support our local tourism industry.

### Work-related transmission remains a concern

Health unions remain concerned about work-related transmission of Covid after incidents of health sector workers testing positive in Southern DHB (Queenstown), Canterbury DHB (at Rosewood Aged Care Home and Burwood), Waikato DHB, Bay of Plenty DHB and Waitemata DHB.

MERAS is part of the union group that is meeting with Worksafe this week to call on them to investigate these incidents after failure by DHBs to share the lessons learnt and put in place appropriate processes and protections for health professionals.

### Holidays Act Compliance projects progressed

Work on the Holidays Act Compliance continued throughout lockdown with meetings held by Zoom. All 20 DHBs are now underway with several just starting

the review phase, and Northland, the three Auckland Metro DHBs and Canterbury-West Coast DHBs now fixing up their payroll systems to address the areas of non-compliance identified in their review phases.

Payouts to individuals are still well away as it is a huge undertaking with recalculation of all employees and former employees back to 2010.



*Nelson Hospital midwives on night shift celebrate Level 1. Their new uniforms attracted attention on the MERAS fb group and could kick start a campaign for a nationally recognised midwives' uniform. What do you think?*

### Covid no barrier to bargaining

The St George's bargaining to renew their Collective Agreement continued remotely during the lockdown and has been ratified in two meetings held by Zoom, a first for MERAS.

Karen Gray, our new MERAS organiser, is setting up a Working Party looking at staffing issues, and we are also exchanging legal letters with St George's over the cancellation of shifts on public holidays.

Jill has signed off the changes to the Rodney Coast Midwives (Warkworth) Collective Agreement, which had to be varied to reflect the new ownership, and Caroline is finalising the Hokianga and Waitaki District Health Services (Oamaru) Collective Agreements.

DHB midwives who are MERAS members will receive a 1.25% pay rise on 1 August. The DHBs MECA renewal process will kick off at the Workplace Reps Forum, which is now being held on 11 November.

**Caroline Conroy, Co-leader (Midwifery)**

**Jill Ovens, Co-leader (Industrial)**