

MERAS AGM August 2020

Chairs Report

This time last year I had just been elected as the MERAS deputy chairperson. I had no expectation of being here today providing the Chairpersons report. 2020 has certainly delivered some surprises.

Last year Karen Ferraccioli had been elected as the MERAS Chairperson and was doing a fantastic job in that role but new and exciting opportunities beckoned and in May this year Karen was appointed as the Director of Midwifery for Hutt Valley DHB. I'd like to thank Karen for the passion and commitment she has given to MERAS not only as the Chairperson but also as a member of the NRC and a MERAS workplace representative at Taranaki. . We have lost Karen as a NRC member but gained a strong advocate for Meras in her Directory of Midwifery Role.

Karen's appointment to the DoM role and the promotion of several MERAS workplace representatives to senior midwife roles in their DHBs has highlighted the contribution MERAS plays in supporting midwives to develop leadership skills I'd like to thank all those members of the MERAS NRC for the contribution each of them have made this year. Being a member of the NRC is largely voluntary and I would like to acknowledge the time and commitment each member of the NRC gives to supporting the work of MERAS. This year has seen a number of new faces around the NRC table and this includes Holly Westcott, Theresa Enright, Joyce Croft, Jaimee Bamford and Jennifer Fletcher. We also welcome back Victoria Christian who was previously on the NRC as the Waitemata DHB representative and is now the Auckland DHB area representative.

This year we farewelled Debbie Eaglen who had the Auckland DHB NRC member and Karen Gray who was the Canterbury representative and stepped down when she took up the new role exciting role of MERAS organiser.

Sadly, we had some obituary notices this year due to the unexpected loss of Pauline Andrews and the loss of Lynda Boyd for illness.

This last year has been an eventful year for MERAS which started with a new DHB MERAS MECA with some points of difference for midwives including paid time for attending the MSR and the introduction at the beginning of this month of new graduate midwives starting at Step 2 of the pay grade and a pay rise for all MERAS members on the 1st August. It has been a great achievement negotiating a pay differential for midwives, one that could not have been done without the memberships support, so thank you. This year also saw the signing of a Midwifery Accord with the Ministry of Health, the Midwifery pay equity claim and much more which we will hear more from the MERAS Co-Leaders.

COVID-19 has threw a curved ball as we entered 2020 and the plans beginning to be put in place to celebrate the International Year of the Midwife had to be put on hold as we all continued to provide maternity care during the lockdown and the continued focus on the health and well-being of our wahine and pepe since then.

I'd like to thank the New Zealand College of midwives CEO Alison Eddy and Midwifery Advisor Claire McDonald for their contribution to the NRC meetings and the ease this provides both organisations in working together to advance the interests of employed midwives.

Lastly I would like to thank the two MERAS Co-Leaders Caroline and Jill not only for the drive and commitment that they show in advancing and supporting the interests of MERAS members but also

for the support and advice that they provide the NRC, your work does not go unnoticed and we are privileged as an NRC to have you both.

MERAS is in good health. All the changes and challenges this year have shown that MERAS is built on solid foundations and that all the work that we all do just strengthens us for whatever is beyond the horizon.

Thank you to each and every MERAS member, as it is our membership that makes us strong.

Michelle Archer

MERAS Chair