

Counting down to Election Day, 17 October

Have you voted yet? With less than a week to go till Election Day, more than 600,000 New Zealanders have already voted. This is well up from the previous two Elections.

The 2020 Election has definitely had the strangest run-up with stop-start campaigning due to Covid-19, and two referendums – one on cannabis legalisation and control, and the other on end of life choice.

A priority issue for MERAS has been the opportunity to encourage those who have lost jobs due to Covid-19 to enter midwifery education programmes. We want some of the money going into trades and apprenticeships to help support midwifery students as we know what a struggle this can be financially.

We have had some cut-through with the media where DHBs are experiencing severe shortages of midwives, but we haven't yet convinced the politicians to take up the challenge, although this is an issue high on the agenda of our Midwifery Accord.

When we know the outcome of the Election, we can continue to push for women's health to be prioritised with adequate funding of maternity services and wrap-around support for new families.

We want better provision of publicly-funded primary birthing centres and upgraded maternity facilities.

And we want pay equity for midwives!

MERAS gears up for first ever Conference

Around 85 workplace reps will be meeting in Auckland on 11 November for our first MERAS Conference.

We are running the Conference as a union education forum, "Midwives leading midwives", focussing on developing an agreed statement of MERAS values, raising our issues in the political sphere, and discussing career pathways for employed midwives.

The Conference will also kick off our process for renewal of the DHBs MECA and other Collective Agreement negotiations. We will then circulate a "log of claims" for you to endorse.



MERAS organiser Karen Gray (left) and ARA Midwifery lecturer Sarah Pallett (right) enjoy a night of politics hosted by Canterbury Unions to give workers the opportunity to ask questions of their politicians. Sarah is running for Parliament in the Christchurch seat of Ilam.

Thinking about community responsibility

It seems appropriate as we near Election Day to remind ourselves of the College of Midwives' Code of Ethics "Responsibilities to the wider community".

- Midwives recognise Māori as tangata whenua of Aotearoa and honour the principles of partnership, protection and participation as an affirmation of the Treaty of Waitangi.
- Midwives encourage public participation in the shaping of social policies and institutions.
- Midwives advocate policies and legislation that promote social justice, improved social conditions and a fairer sharing of the community's resources.
- Midwives acknowledge the role and expertise of community groups in providing care and support for childbearing women.
- Midwives act as effective role models in health promotion for women, families and other health professionals.

Caroline Conroy, Co-leader (Midwifery)
Jill Ovens, Co-leader (Industrial)