

Chairs report for MERAS AGM 2021

This time last year I was elected as the deputy Chair for MERAS so I did not anticipate presenting this Chairs report. This shows how much things can change in a single year.

I would like to acknowledge Michelle Archer who was elected as the Chair last year and who unfortunately had to take a leave of absence during the year to recover from health issues. It was great to see Michelle at the last MERAS NRC meeting and that she was back to her usually cheerful self.

This has been an incredibly busy year for MERAS and I am sure Caroline and Jill will highlight much of the work that MERAS has been involved in. On behalf of the MERAS NRC I'd like to thank Caroline, Jill and all the MERAS staff for all the work they do for MERAS, MERAS members and Midwifery, your energy and passion is greatly appreciated and has certainly raised the profile of MERAS.

The MERAS National Representative Council (NRC) has also had a busy year. Many of NRC have been involved in various projects of MERAS with several of us being members of the MERAS negotiating team for the DHB & MERAS MECA, we were all involved in the strike activities and sorting the LPS rosters and some of us involved in CCDM work and maternity forums at a local level.

The NRC has been doing a piece of work this year focused on the values of MERAS and also identifying key stakeholders we could work more closely with in supporting employed midwives. As part of the work we had a zoom meeting with Jean Te Huia the CEO for Nga Maia.

MERAS continues to lobby the College of Midwives for a seat on the College Board given MERAS is affiliated with the College of Midwives and we represent over 50% of the College membership.

It is great to see MERAS membership continue to grow and the increased recognition by the media and the DHBs that MERAS is the union that should be consulted on issues affecting hospital midwives. Its also very pleasing to see the growth in MERAS workplace representatives which is such an important role in being the eyes and ears of MERAS at a ward and unit level.

The midwifery staffing shortages at most DHBs remain a key concern of the MERAS NRC and is a topic of conversation at each of our meetings. We are pleased to see the initiatives emerging from the Midwifery Accord work and also some of the new initiatives that we are including in the DHB MERAS MECA that will assist in supporting midwives working in our DHBs and flow onto those midwives working in the private maternity units. Hopefully with the increased numbers of midwives with APCs more will consider working if the DHBs and assist in relieving the current midwifery vacancies.

I would also like to acknowledge the resilience of our members as we are facing an ever changing and challenging world now that Covid 19 has made itself known to us.

Finally I'd like to acknowledge each and every MERAS member. It our collective energies and the ability to 'speak with one voice' that attracts new members and makes it so much easier for us to achieve good outcomes for members and midwifery.

As we all look forward to another year I hope that we can start to see a reduction in the midwifery vacancies and workplaces that meet the needs of mothers, babies, whanau and midwives.

Bronwyn King
MERAS

