



Health NZ heralds new era

In less than a month, on 1 July, DHBs will be replaced by Health NZ and the Māori Health Authority.

The hope is that the new entity will transform our health system to be more equitable and accessible for all New Zealanders – one that doesn't depend on the so-called "post code lottery".

There will be strong expectations that our future health system will deliver better health outcomes for Māori and other groups that haven't been well served.

Margie Apa, the new Health NZ CE, has signalled a focus on keeping people, their whanau, and their communities well and out of hospital.

There will be new national, regional and district structures – nationally led, regionally organised and locally delivered.

So what does this mean for those of you who are currently employed by DHBs?

The answer is very little will change for you on 1 July. You will continue to be paid, and you will report to the same people.

Most existing roles and responsibilities won't change and you won't need to re-apply for your job. Everyone working for DHBs now, with the exception of those CEs who are not staying on in an interim role, will automatically transfer over to Health NZ as your employer.

Our MERAS MECA will be transferred in its entirety to Health NZ on day 1. It will become a SECA (single employer collective agreement). This means your terms and conditions of employment won't change.

All liabilities from the DHBs will carry over to Health NZ. This includes compliance with the provisions of the Holidays Act so these projects will continue until the problems have been fixed in the payroll systems and money owed has been paid out.

It also means the Pay Equity bargaining will continue. This is being led on the employer side by a Crown negotiator who was appointed by the Government, not the DHBs.

Access to systems and login details won't change on day 1, and your email addresses won't change at this point either. However, there could be changes to your email signature which may be updated and supported before 1 July.



***New beginnings:** Wairau Hospital midwives get together for the first time as MERAS members. New MERAS workplace reps Silke Powell and Amy Darragh organised the informal meeting at a local restaurant.*

St George's members relieved at decision

St George's Hospital midwives breathed a collective sigh of relief to hear last week's announcement that the maternity service is to continue at least until the new Christchurch central city primary maternity unit opens in the middle of next year.

St George's midwives have been in limbo for the past two months. They have experienced the difficulties in staffing the unit which have meant women transferring from Christchurch Women's Hospital have had to be turned away. They were dreading the final decision would be to close the unit.

St George's, a private hospital, opened a new 12-bed maternity unit last year with three birthing rooms, but have cut back to only five postnatal rooms due to the midwifery shortage.

The midwives, all but one of whom are MERAS members, have worked hard to keep the service going, while at the same time they have been totally stressed about their future and the future of the maternity service they believe in.

St George's has been advertising midwifery positions to fill their vacancies. However, MERAS knows of midwives who were keen to work there, but have not pursued it because of the uncertainty. Now the unit is staying open, MERAS hopes midwives will apply.

Caroline Conroy MERAS Co-Leader (Midwifery)
Jill Ovens MERAS Co-Leader (Industrial)