



## MERAS Update

February 2025

Welcome to the first MERAS update for 2025. This year has started with lots of changes continuing to occur within Health NZ. MERAS is keeping a close eye on those and how they might impact on midwives and maternity services.

**Welcome to midwife new graduates:** MERAS would like to welcome our new midwife graduate members that have been joining the workforce since November. This was the largest cohort ever and is making a welcome difference in many of our maternity units. MERAS hopes that new graduate midwives are feeling well supported and their orientation and local new graduate plans are going as anticipated. If you are a new graduate midwife, and things are not going as expected in your workplace, do not hesitate to talk to your midwife manager, local MERAS workplace representative or contact MERAS directly.

**Public Holiday alternative holiday:** Given all the recent public holidays MERAS has had some enquiries from part-time members about their eligibility for alternative public holidays if they are working on the public holiday or it is a normal rostered day off. If you work full-time, you are eligible for all alternative public holidays unless you choose to take the public holiday on the day that it falls. If you are part-time (or casual) you will be eligible for the alternative public holiday if you meet the following criteria:

*Where a part-time employee's days of work are fixed, the employee shall only be entitled to an alternative holiday if the day would otherwise be a working day for that employee.*

*Where a part-time employee's days are not fixed, the employee shall be entitled to an alternative holiday if they worked on the day of the week that the public holiday falls more than 40 % of the time over the last three (3) months. Payment will be at relevant daily pay.*

There are similar provisions in the MERAS Collective's with other maternity providers.

**Its the season of consultation:** Since December MERAS has been busy providing feedback on various consultation documents including the Treaty Principles Bill, Health NZ Data & Digital, Te Whatu Ora CCTV policy, Health NZ National Public Health (which includes some services available to maternity patients) and local district changes within maternity services.

**Senior midwife working party & job evaluation tool:** Progress continues towards agreeing and finalising the job evaluation tool that will be used to evaluate senior midwife and other health professional senior roles. It now looks almost certain that a version of the NHS tool used in the UK will be used and adapted to the bi-cultural context of Aotearoa. Now that we are out of the holiday period, the work will hopefully gain momentum so that the detailed work on senior midwifery roles can commence.

**Midwifery pay equity claim for the funded sector:** This claim has reached the negotiation phase. MERAS and the Employer group are working closely together to progress this next phase of the claim and to secure the funding that will be required to implement the outcome.

**Midwifery tutors and Tertiary Heads of School:** We have reached out to the Tertiary Education Union (TEU) to work collaboratively on improving the salaries for midwives working as tutors, lecturers, or leaders in midwifery courses at universities or polytechnics. As things stand there is little incentive to move into this area because the pay drop is substantial. It is a multi-layered issue, and we meet the TEU again in March to chart a way forward and find a solution.

**Holidays Act compliance review:** Health NZ has made a commitment to complete all payments by July 2025. Work is continuing in districts around the country to progress payments for current staff. Former staff to be paid once current staff completed. If you know of ex-colleagues who will be entitled to a remediation payment, which includes almost anyone who worked for a DHB or Te Whatu Ora since 1 May 2010, then make sure they have registered on the *National portal for former employees* using the following link:

<https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/for-health-professionals/employment-relations/holidays-act-remediation>

**Te Whatu Ora Collective Agreement (CA) 2025 negotiations:** the MERAS SECA with Te Whatu Ora expires at the end of April 2025. MERAS had discussions with MERAS workplace representatives in November 2024 and started to develop a list of possible claims. These will be finalised and circulated in the next couple of weeks. We can expect a hard line from the employer as regards pay increases in the current environment. The government has imposed strict austerity guidelines on the entire public sector, and particularly so in Health where they insist on pegging back deficit budgets. The situation points to making as many low-cost improvements as possible to the CA and taking opportunities where we can. Look for issues like consistency of senior payrates and an improved salary scale, case load numbers, modern allowances including working from home, safe staffing and safe workplaces to be to the forefront.

**If you are on ACC:** if you have an injury and are going to be on ACC for a few weeks or months and then need a 'return to work' plan. Please talk to MERAS when you commence ACC so that we can discuss the support you might need. MERAS can support you at meetings and discussions about returning to work and support that you might need.

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