



MERAS update

March 2026

Welcome to the first MERAS newsletter of 2026. MERAS hopes that you all had some time for rest and relaxation over the Christmas and Summer season.

MERAS would like to acknowledge and welcome the cohort of new midwives who have been joining maternity services across the country since Christmas. It is great to see the midwifery workforce steadily increasing and vacancies reducing.

Job evaluation tool (JET) project update.

The JET project is tasked with developing a tool to evaluate midwifery, allied and nursing roles on the senior pay scales. As mentioned in previous MERAS updates the tool has been agreed and the project is now at the phase to train job evaluator panel members and identify roles to be part of a pilot to test the tool and the evaluation process.

MERAS has provided the names of 20 members to be trained in the first cohort of job evaluator panel members. Midwives were selected who are in, or have been, in senior midwife roles and cover a range of roles across the four regions of Health NZ. There are likely to be opportunities for more members to be panel members as this project progresses.

A list of 30 senior midwifery roles to be part of the pilot have also been submitted and those role holders who have been chosen may be asked to provide information to their district Chief Midwife to assist in describing the work that they do. Roles that are typical of that role type have been chosen for the pilot. All senior midwife roles will ultimately be evaluated.

Collective for district Chief Midwife and other senior midwife roles

There are some senior midwife roles such as the district chief midwife which are specifically excluded from the current MERAS SECA. MERAS has initiated bargaining for a Collective for this group of MERAS members.

Industrial Scene

When we settled the Health NZ Collective Agreement in the middle-of-2025 we had no idea that bargaining in the rest of the sector would be so drawn out. In settling when we did there was a risk that the other bigger unions might achieve enhanced settlement offers, albeit that they wouldn't include the midwifery specific gains that we were pleased to have achieved in our settlement. Following our settlement there was an Order in Council from the Public Service Commission that back-pay cannot exceed three-months anywhere in the public sector, and that has been strictly enforced.

The NZNO Nurses collective agreement expired in October 2024. There is no sign of when a settlement might occur. Meanwhile, as an example, MERAS midwives on Step 5 registered midwife scale have earned an extra \$1,500.00 (excluding overtime and penal rates) since the expiry of the last MERAS Agreement, and without loss of pay due to strike action. MERAS salaries will increase again on 1 June 2026.

Other unions have been settling Agreements with pay increases of 2.5% and 2% over delayed start two- year periods i.e. beginning long after the expiry of their previous Collective. MERAS is closely monitoring other settlements to ensure our members are not disadvantaged and pay-equity margins are maintained. We have already signalled this to Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora who recognise the issue. MERAS will prioritise any discussions that need to occur to maintain the correct relativity.

APC renewal

Annual practising certificates need to be renewed by the 1st April. The MERAS Collectives all recognise that the employer will pay the cost (or part cost) but in most cases the midwife is required to seek reimbursement. Please talk to your manager if you will struggle financially to make the payment as some districts have provisions in place to support midwives. All districts should also have a rapid reimbursement process, that can assist a midwife avoid any credit card charges.

If you work as an employed midwife for more than one employer, the payment of the APC may be pro-rated between both employment settings. If you work as a casual midwife for a maternity unit and work as a locum or LMC you may want to seek financial advice as to whether reimbursement or claiming the cost as a tax- deductible expense is the best option for you.

Annual FTE calculation process

The Trendcare data that is entered each shift in maternity in-patient areas contributes to the annual calculation of full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing required for the maternity wards areas. The annual calculation process is currently underway and your local MERAS workplace representatives, midwife managers, district chief midwives and the MERAS staff are involved in reviewing the data and agreeing the staffing models needed.

The data that is entered into Trendcare is an important part of this process. If too many patients have not been actualised or categorised over the year, then the calculations cannot go ahead. This means that the work that you do as midwives is not acknowledged and your ward could be understaffed, making it more difficult for you to provide quality care.

Its election year – make sure you and whanau are enrolled

The general election will be held this year on 7th November. It is important that you and your whanau can exercise your right to vote. The law has changed and people can no longer enrol on election day to vote. In fact, once the early voting booths open on 25th October, enrolment ceases; a full two-weeks before voting day! Please ensure your family and friends are all enrolled before that date. Information about enrolment is available on the 'Vote NZ' website.

Holidays Act payments for former employees

Some districts are starting to make Holidays Act payments to former employees. This includes previous roles that you have worked in at your current district. If you have difficulty logging into the Health NZ Holidays Act portal or accessing any other information that you need please contact David.

Multi-jobber situations

MERAS is working with district managers and Chief Midwives to try and minimise the adverse implications of multi-jobber situations. If you are in a multi-jobber situation that is impacting on your annual leave balance and other entitlements or are considering splitting your current FTE into two roles (and a multi-jobber situation) please contact Caroline.

Public Holiday alternative days

MERAS is aware that some districts seem to have changed the way they manage public holidays for midwives who are on a rostered day off but are entitled to a public Holiday alternative day. It appears that some districts are making a payment to midwives for this day instead of providing an alternative day credit. MERAS is following up to understand why this change has been made.

Please check any payments that you receive, especially if you usually work 12 hour shifts. If you are concerned about the payment, please email your line manager first. You are welcome to follow up with MERAS if you have any concerns about the answers received from payroll. MERAS will update members once we have more information.

Changes to the College of Midwives regional committee structures

The College of Midwives is currently in the process of changing its national governance board structure and making changes at regional committees, in line with changes to the Incorporated Societies Act. This is an opportunity to refresh the regional structures. MERAS is aware that many MERAS members have stopped attending regional College meetings and question the purpose of the College. MERAS members represent over 50% of the College membership – MERAS has set up some dates for zoom meetings to hear your views on what you believe is the function or purpose of any College regional/ sub-regional structure and how best can the College meet the interests of employed midwives. The dates are included in the email with this newsletter.

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