



President's Report 2022

Another year and we are still feeling the impacts of Covid, which means unfortunately we have been unable to meet in person for our May study day and AGM. The last year feels like a blur with further lockdowns and now moving to the phase of living with Covid, with schools flexing in the way they have coped with the ever-changing environment. For school nurses this has meant that we have adjusted to a new normal where our processes have changed so that we can continue to provide health services to young people while continuing to have Covid health and safety measures in place. When we think back to two years ago, we have come a long way in safeguarding ourselves from Covid, with the initial vaccine roll out and booster vaccinations to the way masking has become a normal way of functioning.

We were very fortunate that we were able to meet in person last May for our study day and AGM. Our theme for the study day, not surprisingly, was focussed around Covid. We heard from Dr Mark O'Carroll, a specialist in Respiratory Medicine, who provided us with a Covid update – looking at new variants, vaccines, and treatments. We then had a panel of school nurses who shared with us some of their experiences of dealing with a Covid outbreak in their schools and from school nurses working as part of the Covid response in MIQ facilities. Finally, we listened to Dr Hiran Thabrew, Director of the Werry Centre, about the effects of Covid on young people's mental health.

Moving forward we are hoping to be able to offer two in-person study days over the course of the next year and a supervision workshop. We look forward to reconnecting in person in November.

There are major changes ahead for the health system with Health NZ and the Māori Health Authority taking over from the District Health Boards on the 1st of July. During a recent update from Margie Apa, interim CEO of Health NZ, she talked about adolescent health as having its own unit as opposed to being incorporated with children's health. What this means for school-based health services will not be clear for some time.

Over the last 6 months we are aware that the recruitment of nurses to school nursing positions has become increasingly difficult, this has been reflected in the number of school nurse vacancies advertised on our website. This has not been helped by the increasing pay gap between DHB employed nurses and nurses working in other sectors. We have received several emails from members asking for the ASNG's help with addressing these pay differences. While as an executive committee we are very aware of and acknowledge that this is an ongoing and important issue for school nursing, we are a group of volunteers who support school nurses, not a union. Our mission statement states that the Auckland School Nurses Group strives to promote excellence by supporting evidence based professional practice, empowering nurses in schools to enhance their skills and knowledge through professional development and supervision. The executive will continue to advocate for school nursing but would encourage you to engage with the relevant unions to further address the pay parity issues.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the executive committee for their contribution to the Auckland School Nurses Group and for the work they do behind the scenes, especially around our study days. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the following Executive members who are stepping down today and those who have stepped down over the course of the last year, Laura Williams (treasurer), Tracey Stanners (correspondence secretary), Alana Trotter, Vanessa Hurling, Sue Iles, and Anne Barham.

As some of you will be aware I am stepping down from the role of Co-president after 6 years in the position. It has been an honour and a privilege to help lead and support the Auckland School Nurses Group during this time. I know that I leave you in very capable hands.

On behalf of the Auckland School Nurses Group, we would like to thank you for your dedication and professionalism as you continue to care for, support and advocate for our rangatahi.

Heather Laxon and Anita Wicks