



## President's Report 2021

We feel very grateful that we are here today greeting you in person after the previous turbulent year. Little did we know when we met online for our last AGM that we would be going through another Covid outbreak and lockdown in August, followed by another couple of brief lockdowns early this year. Yet while the rest of the world has struggled and continues to struggle with the pandemic, we had the privilege of enjoying the holiday season and the summer. We would like to take a moment to acknowledge the nurses and other health care professionals who have worked tirelessly around the world, in health systems which have been strained to the maximum, caring for the sick and dying.

The pandemic and its consequences have made us very adaptable which was evident in the way we held our AGM online last year. Thank you to all of you that attended, we have now passed a resolution that in the event of having to hold our AGM virtually we can have a smaller quorum for the meeting to take place.

Due to the Covid restricted meeting numbers, we did not hold a study day in May last year, however we did run a successful supervision workshop in July. We met for our study day in November at Albany Senior High and had a variety of presentations. These included a lively talk by Gwendoline Smith about the futility of worry and overthinking, followed by the science behind breathing by Tania Clifton-Smith from Breathing Works. There was much fun and some competitiveness during a Kohoot quiz to test our nursing knowledge. This was followed by a talk from Jaqui O'Connor about nurturing wellness in our rangatahi.

Once again, this year our secondary schools were affected by the covid outbreaks, particularly Mt Albert Grammar and Papatoetoe High School. We look forward to hearing a bit more from the nurses at these schools later today.

One of the challenges facing our health system this year is the rollout of the Covid vaccination programme. We are grateful that school nurses were recognised by the Ministry of Health as front-line primary health care workers. The Auckland School Nurses Group lobbied the DHBs to ensure that our non DHB funded nurses were also included in the vaccine roll out to primary health care work force.

What the vaccination rollout will mean for secondary schools remains unclear. However, both the Prime Minister and the Director General of Health have both mentioned that when the vaccine has been approved for 12–16-year-olds, a school-based programme may be considered.

In New Zealand we haven't had to deal with widespread covid infections and some of our new behaviours, such as increased hand hygiene and staying home when we are sick have led to a significant decrease in flu and viral illness rates. However, Covid appears to have affected our rangatahi in other ways, nurses are antidotally reporting seeing increased levels of anxiety and eating disorders. School nurses are in an excellent position to be able to identify and support our rangatahi as they navigate their way through this very uncertain time. Hopefully, some of the information from today's study day will help equip you to do this.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the executive committee for their contribution to the Auckland School Nurses Group. We would like to acknowledge Karyn Wilson (secretary), Laura Williams (treasurer) and Tracey Stanners (correspondence secretary) for the work they do behind the scenes, especially around our bi-annual study days. Covid has meant that we have now moved most of our Executive meetings online which means a lot less travel and we meet in person four times a year.

As we move forward into the next year, we will be facing some uncertainty. Our whole health system is going to be restructured, what this means and how it will affect school nursing is unknown. However, we are aware that the Society for Youth Health Professionals Aotearoa New Zealand (SHYPHANZ) is currently working with the Ministry of Health reviewing secondary school-based health services. We hope to be able to share a bit more about this at our study day in November.

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