

22/5/2020

## Chief Nursing Officer letter to Nurses across Aotearoa

Tēnā koutou katoa,

I want to start this pānui by giving a big mihi once again to everyone involved in last week's International Nurses Day celebrations and continuing the celebration of International Year of the Nurse. While the day might be over, it was an important reminder of the mahi that nurses and healthcare workers are doing in New Zealand and around the world every day, particularly in the context of COVID-19. I have heard mentioned that we should extend the year of the nurse celebrations to the decade of the nurse.

Building on the success of our last two webinars, the Chief Nursing Office is planning to host more in the coming months and are working with the National Nurse Leaders group to confirm the webinar topics. If you have any ideas for themes for these webinars, please send them through to us at [chiefnurse@health.govt.nz](mailto:chiefnurse@health.govt.nz)

### Contact tracing app

On Wednesday the Ministry of Health officially launched its contact tracing app: NZ COVID Tracer. It can be downloaded from Google and Apple online stores. It is like a digital diary that you can use by scanning QR codes at locations you visit to support contact tracing in New Zealand.

Kiwis who download the app will create a digital diary of the places they visit by scanning QR codes displayed at the entrances to business premises, other organisations and public buildings.

People can also register their contact information through the app to make sure the National Close Contact Service can get in touch if they need to. More information can be found [here](#). I have downloaded the app already which is easy to use, so hope you find it useful too.

### Voluntary Bonding Scheme 2020

Many of you will be familiar with the Voluntary Bonding Scheme (VBS which was set up to encourage newly qualified health professionals to work in the communities and specialties that need them most, and to retain essential health professionals throughout New Zealand. Those on the scheme receive annual payments to help repay their student loan or as top-up income.

For the first time this year enrolled nurses working in aged care and mental health and addictions were included in VBS which is great news.

The Ministry accepted all 418 registrations for the 2020 intake: 273 registered nurses, 14 enrolled nurses, 86 midwives, 35 general practice trainees, five sonographers, and five dentists. Of the registered and enrolled nurses, 164 are working in mental health and addictions, the highest number within in intake. 80 registrants identify as Māori while 44 identify as Pasifika, the highest numbers than in any previous intake.

A big congratulations to everyone who was accepted.

## **Enrolled Nurse Support into Practice Programme (ENSIPP)**

In 2014, the Enrolled Nurse Section of New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) proposed a Supported into Practice Programme (ENSIPP) for new graduate ENs. The 2020 ENSIPP maintains the original name and many of the elements proposed in the original NZNO document. I know that the EN Section members are very proud to see this work come to fruition.

Central Region Technical Advisory Services (TAS) has been working with the Ministry and DHBs to develop the Advanced Choice of Employment (ACE) process for Enrolled Nurses (EN).

The ACE EN Process commences in June 2020. The EN ACE process is the gateway or portal to the ENSIPP programme. The ACE EN Process and Business Rules will align with the ENSIPP Service Specifications and Learning Framework which have been developed by the DHB Directors of Nursing and ENSIPP Working Group.

ENSIPP is a national programme. It is expected that DHBs take an all of systems approach and will work with non-government organisations including Aged Residential Care, home and community providers and primary health organisations to incorporate new graduate Enrolled Nurses into the ENSIPP.

Communications to the nursing sector has been developed including a webpage for ENs and holding a series of webinars with EN education providers and EN students. Further resources will be developed over time.

The ENSIPP framework can be found [here](#).

## **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

With the move to Alert Level 2, the MoH TAG Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) group has reflected on IPC principles in New Zealand's current COVID-19 context and feedback from the health and disability sector on how our existing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) advice could be strengthened.

We have updated a number of resources related to Infection Prevention Control and PPE, which can be found [here](#). This includes two overarching documents to guide PPE use at Alert Level 2: *Alert Level 2: PPE required when caring for a suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19 case*, and *Alert Level 2: Risk assessment questions if COVID-19 status is unknown*.

We are continually reviewing IPC advice as the COVID-19 situation evolves. This includes advice to support appropriate PPE use. The risk of community exposure to COVID-19 has fallen significantly as we move into Alert Level 2, with no evidence of underlying community spread after extensive testing. Aspects of our current guidance documents may change during Alert Level 2 if ongoing surveillance shows continued decrease or increase in cases.

## **COVID-19 Psychosocial and Mental Wellbeing Recovery Plan**

The Ministry of Health last week released the Kia Kaha, Kia Māia, Kia Ora Aotearoa - COVID-19 psychosocial and mental wellbeing recovery plan. This builds on the response plan previously published for COVID-19 Alert Level 4, which provided guidance to assist agencies involved in planning, coordinating and delivering psychosocial interventions and mental health and addiction services.

The new plan provides a framework for collective actions to support whānau and communities to adapt and thrive next 12 to 18 months. It draws on the directions for mental wellbeing that were laid down in He Ara Oranga: Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction.

It is a 'living document' that the Ministry of Health will continue to review as we assess the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. To this end, we are inviting feedback on the document to help build a collective picture of how different organisations are contributing to COVID-19 recovery and to assist with shaping a further iteration of the plan, anticipated for September 2020.

We would be grateful for your feedback by 15 June 2020. If you would like to provide feedback, visit the [Ministry's Consultation Hub](#).

### **Phone counselling service for frontline workers: 0800 820 080**

An 0800 number has been set up to provide extra support to frontline health workers who may be experiencing distress or heightened anxiety at this challenging time. Any frontline health and support worker can call 0800 820 080 to talk with a trained and experienced mental health professional.

Healthcare workers often work in extremely stressful environments, which have been heightened during COVID-19. It's important to remember that if we aren't feeling good, there are things we can do to improve our mental wellbeing. In addition to the phone counselling service, a range of information and tools are available on the Ministry of Health website [here](#). I encourage you to share this with your friends and whanau.

Cabinet will review Alert Level 2 restrictions on Monday 25 May, and I will provide an update on their decision in next week's pānui. As we continue to adapt to changes at home, work and in our communities, thank you again for continuing to ensure that our health services are delivered to the highest standard. Whether you are at the frontline or working behind the scenes or working at home, know that you are all making a difference.

Nāku noa,

*Margareth Broodkoorn*  
Chief Nursing Officer  
Ministry of Health