



Tūmuaki Nēhi Aotearoa | HANGAIA NGĀ KAIĀRAHI NĒHI

Nurse Executives Aotearoa | DEVELOPING NEW ZEALAND'S NURSE LEADERS

29 July 2024

Open letter to Nurse Leaders from Nurse Executives Aotearoa

Kia ora koutou

The Nurse Executives Aotearoa executive team acknowledge the incredible mahi you are all doing in what are very turbulent times. Nursing as a profession is the backbone of the Aotearoa New Zealand health system and is the team that pulls together to ensure the patient journey through our health system is characterised by care and compassion.

As a profession, we understand the financial imperative and work hard to ensure nursing care is provided as efficiently and effectively as possible. However, we also understand that nursing care is an investment, not a cost. In a high quality and efficient health system characterised by strong clinical leadership, patient experience, feedback and patient centred health outcomes show how effective nursing care is. Investment in nursing and nursing leadership must continue because we know what happens when investment decreases, professional development is stopped, and nursing leadership is disestablished. We learnt this following the 1990s reforms where evidence shows that the disestablishment of nursing leadership back then resulted in increased adverse clinical outcomes across a range of nurse sensitive patient outcomes.¹

We cannot stop investing in nursing simply because nursing is one of the largest expenditure items in healthcare. Of course it is, nursing is the largest regulated health workforce in our health system. We are the profession that is with the patient throughout the largest part of their health journey, working closely with our colleagues from other professions to ensure that journey is safe and of high quality. We are frequently recognised as the most trusted profession amongst all professions. But without the leadership of senior nurses, without the employment and development of new graduate nurses, and without ongoing professional development of the nursing workforce, we will falter, with the real possibility of failing, in these endeavours. The outcome will be another round of nursing workforce shortages as nurses leave the country and/or the profession for better opportunities elsewhere and ultimately this will be reflected in poor patient outcomes and increased morbidity and mortality – we must learn from our mistakes in the 1990s and not repeat them.

Nurse leaders in this country are incredibly talented and are working hard to hold our system together while they are blamed for the precarious financial position Te Whatu Ora finds itself in. Health is not a corporate business and should not be run as such. The health system should be about people. Not just people who require care, but the people who work in the system as well. Te Mauri o Rongo, the New Zealand Health Charter supports people working in healthcare, calling on us to care for the people who care for the people, recognising, supporting and valuing our people and the work

¹ Carryer, J. B., Diers, D., McCloskey, B., & Wilson, D. (2010). Effects of Health Policy Reforms on Nursing Resources and Patient Outcomes in New Zealand. *Policy, Politics & Nursing Practice*, 11(4), 275–285. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527154410393360>

McCloskey, B. A., & Diers, D. K. (2005). Effects of New Zealand's health reengineering on nursing and patient outcomes. *Medical care*, 43(11), 1140–1146. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.mlr.0000182549.85761.cd>



Tūmuaki Nēhi Aotearoa | HANGAIA NGĀ KAIĀRAHI NĒHI

Nurse Executives Aotearoa | DEVELOPING NEW ZEALAND'S NURSE LEADERS

we all do, to work together to design and deliver services, and to provide guidance on the behaviours we expect from everyone.²

Nurse Executives Aotearoa acknowledges the work of our nurse leaders. We stand beside you to support your mahi, your focus on people needing care and on your teams.

Ngā mihi mahana kia koutou.

Nurse Executives Aotearoa Executive Team

² [Te Mauri o Rongo - NZ Health Charter \(tewhaturora.govt.nz\)](https://www.tewhaturora.govt.nz/)