



## COASTN Chair Report for 2020 AGM

Well no-one could have predicted when the first murmurs of a new coronavirus began to surface that 2020 was going to turn out as it has! With the global death toll surpassing 1.2 million people and upwards of 46 million reported as having been infected none of us have ever experienced a pandemic of these proportions. Life has been turned upside down, and as nurses our work lives have also been significantly affected. With borders closed, and grim predictions early into the pandemic of how the NZ healthcare system could be easily overwhelmed if nothing was done to try & contain the spread of the virus. While it appears that - so far – New Zealand has managed to contain the small community outbreaks (with the majority of new cases now being associated with inbound arrivals from countries badly affected overseas) the second wave of Covid-19 causing a new round of havoc across Europe & the UK should remind us all not to be complacent. This is especially relevant for those services & flight nurses who are involved with international repatriation – for these colleagues their work practices along with workloads must have changed immeasurably, and any aspiring flight/transport colleagues would have a timely reminder that our jobs are not always glamorous and fun. In fact, the pandemic has seriously curtailed both personal & professional lives, and forced us all into finding new & innovative ways to achieve day-to-day tasks: such as the rise in the use of virtual meetings like running pared back versions of national conferences and delivering this year's AGM via Zoom.

As a committee it has meant the opportunities to accomplish some of the work we had planned was undertaken slightly differently. The sub-committee, ably chaired by Di Fuller, has succeeded in completing the National Entry, Education, Training & Maintenance Criteria for Aeromedical Nurses in New Zealand a huge piece of work that has been circulated to COASTN members (and is available on our web page under resources) and, while voluntary criteria/standards service providers have been encouraged to adopt these in a effort to standardize what it means to be a flight/transport nurse in New Zealand. By trying to establish these criteria it is hoped that COASTN can help define what it is to be a flight/transport nurse, inform of our practice and establish where we fit as far as scope of practice (are we best aligned with those in relatively independent/primary care settings, CNS roles, NP roles).

Services differ in their staffing models: nurse-only, nurse-paramedic, nurse-doctor teams, specialty retrieval teams, all of which impacts how we as nurses practice (from standing orders, established protocols, to direct supervision/team participation). This has the potential to impact on flight/transport nurse remuneration, as services differ in where on the MECA their nurses may sit. The financial concerns the committee raised at the last AGM continue, and have impacted the sub-committee work in that the thought of creating an app to run the COASTN passport has been shelved as the cost is far too prohibitive given our tenuous fiscal situation. This has not been helped by having to cancel the COASTN national flight nurses course for 2020 as Level IV lockdown was enforced – a sought after course in terms of nationally provided

education and a source of college income. Course co-ordinator remuneration and some pro-rata payments were made to course contractors were made as the majority of the planning & organisation had been completed by the time the committee undertook the decision to cancel the course. Discussions are ongoing with the course co-ordinator, AUT & other contractors in planning & timing the 2021 course, along with consideration of potentially running more than one course per year. Further details can be found in the course co-ordinators report.

The NASO IHT review/restructure also continues, albeit a little overwhelmed/sidelined by the needs of the pandemic. In response to concerns about the lack of clinical input into this process – which appeared to be driven by fiscal needs & NASO/MoH/DHB management concerns – a NZ IHT Clinical network group was established consisting of clinicians from around NZ (both nursing & medical) who have been working together sharing data and meeting with NASO to discuss the national strategy for aeromedical services. There is an ongoing effort to attempt to standardise data collection, look at equipment compatibility, workforce modelling and clinical co-ordination in order to reduce the duplication of some aspects of IHT. Please ensure your voice is heard by your service, and that your services are part of the process – as I have learned over my involvement with COASTN we may all be called flight or transport nurses but our practices may differ vastly.

Annie, our fabulous PNA, continues to ably guide the committee through the process of completing the updated annual plan, along with ensure we meet the requirements set out by NZNO and C&S rules. Without Annie our job as a committee would be a million times harder – as the large C&S handbook is not easy to digest! She serves as a great conduit between the industrial auspices of NZNO & the professional & clinical focus we have as college members. Her PNA report details industrial-focussed work undertaken by NZNO along with some of the challenges the organisation has faced in the past year, coupled with the work the Board of Directors has undertaken in an effort to be more transparent and engage members in how they work in the face of recent internal board upheaval. While we might not be so interested in the industrial and governance side of NZNO it impacts on us as health professionals, hence the effort made to engage membership in board activities.

This AGM we farewell both Di Fuller & Helen Poole from the committee. Both DI & Helen have brought a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm along with great treasury skills (not so much a sought after position Helen) and the drive to achieve national education/training/maintenance criteria (Di). We thank them for generously giving of their time and expertise, their hard work, and wish them well for their future endeavours. Many thanks to those members who put their hands up to fill the 2 vacancies and become involved at committee level.

As we move into 2021 can I encourage all COASTN members to look at their practice, their services and decide how COASTN can help you achieve what you want within your chosen profession, then let the committee know what work you wish us to undertake/focus on your behalf. The pandemic isn't over yet – so please ensure you take care of yourselves and your families, and seize the current challenges as an opportunity to come up with new & innovative ways to meet the ongoing issues we continue to face as flight & transport specialty nurses.

Nga mihi

**Toni Johnston, COASTN Chair.**