

Workforce Taskforce Update

Issue no. 1

October 2022

Welcome to the first of our regular updates to keep you informed about the Workforce Taskforce. This update talks more about the role of the Taskforce, recent initiatives, and those coming up.

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About the Workforce Taskforce

The Workforce Taskforce is a partnership between Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand and Te Aka Whai Ora – Māori Health Authority established to address workforce pressures and a joint vision for the future health workforce. It is co-chaired by Ailsa Claire, Interim Workforce Lead from Te Whatu Ora and Anna-Marie Ruhe, Interim Workforce Commissioning Lead from Te Aka Whai Ora. The Taskforce has a shared goal and strong commitment to achieve equity, improve Māori health outcomes and embed Te Tiriti ways of working. There is a clear drive to support and grow the Māori workforce and people working in kaupapa Māori services. It will also focus on creating opportunities for Pacific and disabled people in the health workforce.

The Taskforce is focused on areas requiring immediate attention and substantive change in ways of working to make improvements. This includes short-term initiatives to alleviate pressures while developing longer-term strategies to build a sustainable workforce to meet ongoing and future challenges. These initiatives support revised models of care, responsive employment and training pathways and building capacity in our workforce. This work led by the Taskforce will contribute to the wider goal of creating a simple, more equitable and coordinated health system. A key focus is the retention and wellbeing of our workforce, and the Taskforce will work alongside other areas to directly support this.

Role of the Taskforce

The Taskforce will provide recommendations on future workforce development approaches and the investment required to make transformational changes. We have the opportunity now with a single health system to take a whole-of-system, coordinated, national approach. The Taskforce is enabling changes now with some key initiatives already delivered. Other changes will take more time as there are long-standing and endemic workforce issues that can't be resolved quickly.

Reporting to the Chief Executives of Te Whatu Ora and Te Aka Whai Ora, the Taskforce has an initial tenure of two years. The [Terms of Reference](#) outline the purpose and role of the Taskforce.

The Taskforce will oversee actions to strengthen the health workforce and achieve the long-term shifts needed to enable the vision for Pae Ora. It will draw on knowledge from across the health sector working with employers, union partners, tertiary training providers, private providers (hospitals and aged residential care) and professional regulators to develop a work programme and accelerate training in priority service areas.

Taskforce members

The Taskforce membership brings together expertise and experience from across the sector in health workforce, Māori health and service development, Pacific health, strategy and commissioning, planned care and people and culture.

Members of the Taskforce:

- Ailsa Claire - Taskforce Chair/ Interim Workforce Lead, Te Whatu Ora
- Anna-Marie Ruhe - Taskforce Chair/Interim Workforce Commissioning Lead, Te Aka Whai Ora
- Dr Jason Tuhoe - General Practitioner
- Fiona Michel - Chief Executive Officer, Braemar Hospital
- Gillian Dudgeon - Deputy Chief Executive, Delivery, Tertiary Education Commission
- Kate Clapperton-Rees - New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU)
- Markerita (Meg) Poutasi - National Director, Pacific Health, Te Whatu Ora
- Mairi Lucas - New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU)
- Professor Joanne Baxter - Dean, Dunedin School of Medicine, University of Otago
- Sonia Hawea - Chief Executive Officer, Taikura Trust
- Andrew Slater – Transformation, Chief Executive Whakarongorau
- Taima Campbell - Manukura Hauora - Te Puna Hauora Matua o Hauraki.

Te Aka Whai Ora and Te Whatu Ora executives will attend Taskforce meetings to support alignment with wider activities as required and requested. In particular, alignment with Commissioning and Service Development in Te Aka Whai Ora (Mara Andrews), National Commissioning (Abbe Anderson) and Transformation and Change (Andrew Slater) in Te Whatu Ora.

Work underway

Work programme

The Taskforce is confirming its work programme to be delivered over the next two years. This will include the future vision and aspirations for the health workforce and the overall approach it will take. It will align with the strategic direction of the Te Pae Tata Health Plan and provide oversight of the priority areas and initiatives (immediate, medium, and long-term) that respond to workforce pressures.

Working groups

Dedicated working groups are being established across key health workforce occupations - nursing, midwifery, medical, allied health, kaiāwhina (the non-regulated workforce eg, Health Care Assistants, vaccinators) and administration and clerical. These groups will make recommendations to the Taskforce on growing and strengthening these areas. The nursing group is already well established through the existing Nursing Pipeline Programme. The role of these groups and how they will operate is currently being developed. More information about the groups and the membership will be made available as they form and develop their Terms of Reference and work programmes.

As the working groups establish, they will engage with a range of relevant stakeholders, including unions and key sector groups.

The Working Groups will be overseen by the following co-leads from Te Whatu Ora and Te Aka Whai Ora:

- **Nursing:** Margaret Dotchin, Chief Nursing Officer, Te Whatu Ora Te Toka Tumai, Auckland and Nadine Gray, Interim Principal Nursing Advisor, Nursing, Te Aka Whai Ora
- **Midwifery:** Julie Patterson, Director, Women's Health, Te Whatu Ora Toka Tumai, Auckland, and Megan Tahere, Interim Principal Advisor – Kahu Taurima, Te Aka Whai Ora
- **Medical:** Dr Jeff Brown, District Director, Te Whatu Ora Te Pae Hauora o Ruahine o Tararua, MidCentral, and Dr Rawiri McKree-Jansen, Chief Medical Officer, Te Aka Whai Ora
- **Kaiāwhina:** Ngaira Harker, Interim Principal Advisor – Kaiāwhina workforce, Te Aka Whai Ora and Allison Plumridge, Director Workforce, TAS, Te Whatu Ora
- **Allied Health, Technical & Scientific:** Sue Waters, Chief Health Professions Officer, Te Whatu Ora Te Toka Tumai, Auckland and Jamaine Fraser, Interim Principal Advisor, Workforce, Te Aka Whai Ora
- **Clerical & Admin:** Ailsa Claire, Interim Workforce Lead, Te Whatu Ora (until co-leads are appointed)

Workforce initiatives

In August the Workforce Taskforce made recommendations to the Minister of Health Hon Andrew Little on a number of initiatives to address key workforce pressures and start providing immediate relief. These initiatives focus on boosting the workforce by removing barriers to make it easier for more overseas doctors and nurses to come and work in New Zealand. They include creating more responsive training pathways, increasing recruitment, and improving immigration processes to alleviate workforce shortages and to build a sustainable workforce. These initiatives will start addressing wider supply and demand challenges and include training more of our own health workers locally in the long-term to strengthen capability.

Initiatives recently delivered

- **The Internationally Qualified Nursing CAP Fund** was the first initiative to be delivered with the fund opening in late August. The fund provides financial assistance of up to NZ \$10,000 (maximum) for International Qualified Nurses (IQNs) required to complete a Competence Assessment Programme (CAP) to work as a registered nurse in New Zealand. This fund removes one of the financial barriers for IQNs by reducing some of the costs of completing a CAP offered by Nursing Council of New Zealand accredited providers. It aims to encourage more international nurses to New Zealand and support them to gain their registration. More information is available on the [Te Whatu Ora website](#).
- **The Return to Nursing Workforce Support Fund** has been extended with Round Three of funding opening on 12 September. This fund provides financial support of up to \$5,000 (maximum) for nurses based in New Zealand to return to practice, including support for internationally qualified nurses who are working in New Zealand as Health Care Assistants/support workers to gain their registration. Rounds one and two have been successful with 225 applicants being approved for funding. More information is available on the [Te Whatu Ora website](#).
- **The Real Nurses campaign** launched in July continues to run until the end of October with a focus on attracting more men, Māori, and Pacific people to nursing. The Real Nurses multi-media campaign builds on previous work done by the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) and features real nurses talking about why they chose their career in nursing.

It has been running across a range of channels and social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitch, TikTok, YouTube, TVNZ on demand, Google Native and Google Search Ads).

The campaign has gained traction with over 105,0000 people visiting the Real Nurses website so far. Five thousand of those visitors have clicked through to Tertiary Education Organisations to find out more about nursing courses in their area. For more information go to [realnurses.co.nz website](https://realnurses.co.nz)

Initiatives coming up

- **The International Recruitment Centre** being established within Te Whatu Ora is on track to be up and running by the end of October. This will provide wraparound services in immigration, relocation, and settlement to make it easier for overseas health workers to come and work in New Zealand. These services will help with immigration advice, registration, and support with relocation and settling into New Zealand communities, for overseas health workers to simplify the process, minimise duplication and streamline immigration pathways.
- **The six-month pilot for a New Zealand Registration Examination (NZREX) Bridging Programme** is getting ready to be implemented later this year. This pilot will run in the Northern Region, based in Auckland, and prepare overseas-trained doctors for entry into the two-year internship training programme in hospitals. It aims to increase the number of overseas-trained doctors in New Zealand, supporting them into the workforce with an improved pathway. Initially it will start with a group of 10 candidates to enter the workforce in mid-2023. Criteria for selection into the programme is being finalised and applications are due to open in November.
- **The pilot for the NZREX General Practice Pathway** being led by the Waikato District is progressing with training sites being finalised with GPs. This pilot, in partnership with primary care providers, will enable overseas doctors to complete internships in community-based settings, while ensuring they become familiar with the delivery of care in a hospital setting. It targets those who wish to go on and practice in primary care. Selection criteria for this programme is being confirmed and applications are expected to open in November. The pilot is due to start in February 2023.
- **An international Recruitment campaign** will be launched later in November. The campaign will proactively target New Zealand registered health workers overseas encouraging them to return home, and internationally qualified workers to work in New Zealand. This will provide a platform for a nationally coordinated campaign for all regions. As part of developing the campaign a research agency has been commissioned to gather insights about why health and disability workers choose New Zealand as a destination to support the campaign messaging.

For more information about these initiatives go to the [Te Whatu Ora website](https://www.tewhatuora.govt.nz)

Other key developments

- [Health Minister Andrew Little](#) recently announced New Zealand doctors who choose to train as community GPs will be paid as much during training as their hospital counterparts. This is part of the General Practice Education Programme that Te Whatu Ora is working on with the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners to strengthen the GP training pathway and increase the number of GPs trained a year from 200 to 300 with a focus on growing more Māori and Pacific GPs. This together with other initiatives underway will make it easier for overseas-trained doctors to register in New Zealand to practice and increase the number of GPs working in our communities.

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- Work is underway to establish a National Rural Hospital Locum Coordination Service in the first half of next year. Te Aka Whai Ora and Te Whatu Ora will work in partnership with Hauora Taiwhenua (the Rural Health Network) to establish this service. It will focus on supporting and strengthening the rural health workforce to meet ongoing challenges and be responsive to rural whānau and community needs. It will implement initiatives and activities to attract and grow a pool of New Zealand based and international locum doctors to help alleviate rural hospital medical workforce shortages.

We look forward to keeping you updated as we progress these and other new developments to grow and strengthen our workforce.

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Te Whatu Ora

Anna-Marie Ruhe
Taskforce Chair/Interim Workforce
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Te Aka Whai Ora