On 23 October 1915 ten New Zealand trained nurses lost their lives in the service of their country when the ship "Marquette" was torpedoed and sunk in the Aegean Sea. In WW1, 400 nurses were on war service from just over 2000 nurses on the NZ Register of Nurses.

The loss of these nurses was a national calamity and keenly felt by colleagues. The question of a memorial was discussed by a committee of the Otago Branch of the Trained Nurses Association in 1916. In those days numerous monuments were erected in memory of soldiers. Nurses visualised a living memorial, such as a benevolent fund, to give assistance to nurses who through sickness or old age were unable to pursue their nursing duties.

A committee was established and Dr Lindo Ferguson, Dean of the Medical Faculty, Otago University assisted in the establishment of the fund. Dr Ferguson had always taken a keen interest in nurses and their welfare. He supported the proposed Memorial Fund and was the President of the Fund from its inception until his death in 1948. Committees were active all over New Zealand.

The first Annual General Meeting was held in the Dunedin Town Hall on 20 June 1918. The Fund balance sheet stood at just over £5000 which had been raised from all over New Zealand. That sum was invested in New Zealand War Loans which yielded an annual income of £225. The first year the Fund gave grants totalling £10. The fund headquarters has remained in Dunedin for 100 years; the committee meets monthly.

In the 70th year of the New Zealand Nurses Memorial Fund (NZNMF) the first female President was elected. Previously it had been managed by doctors.

The NZNMF in 2017: The Fund continues to be in good heart thanks to prudent management by all treasurers and committee members. Application forms from nurses all over New Zealand are considered by the Dunedin committee of nurses each month.

Each application form is discussed and a one-off grant is given to help over difficult times. Annuitants, mostly elderly, receive monthly sums of money to improve their quality of life. This gift can be used anyway they like. The letters of gratitude received tell of the huge difference the gift has made assisting with the power bill, house maintenance, chiropodist and dentist visits.

The original intent of the Fund is still the same today as it was a 100 years ago.

- The relief of nurses in distress occasioned by sickness, old age, accident or other misfortune.
- To raise funds for the purpose of providing such relief by subscription, donation, legacy or otherwise.

Annual membership is $10. Life Membership is $100. 
Email: nznmfund@gmail.com

Subscriptions or donations may be sent to: 
The NZ Nurses Memorial Fund Inc. PO Box 5363, Moray Place, Dunedin 9058