



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**12 May 2020**

### **Celebrating New Zealand aged care nurses on International Nurses Day**

Take a moment today, International Nurses Day, to thank the 5,000 registered nurses in aged residential care (ARC) who expertly and compassionately care for the 36,000 older Kiwis in more than 650 rest homes around the country.

New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA) Chief Executive Simon Wallace says Covid-19 has reinforced the critical and irreplaceable work of all registered nurses and this year's annual International Nurses' Day is an opportunity to thank them.

"But in particular, I want to thank all the registered nurses ARC who have fronted an extraordinary challenge, caring for some of New Zealand's most high-risk, vulnerable people.

"We have seen outstanding dedication, some forming their own bubbles living onsite to care for our residents, taking them away from their own families. Many have also stepped up to take on additional shifts to cover for sick colleagues or for those unable to work because of childcare responsibilities.

"Even where small clusters have occurred in rest homes our teams have worked to manage them, often with huge personal sacrifice. All our nurses have done an outstanding job, showing leadership, clinical expertise, courage, and compassion in keeping thousands and thousands of older Kiwis safe. It is pleasing to see so many of the clusters now closed."

Mr Wallace says under the guidance of the NZACA Nursing Leadership Group, consisting of seven experienced registered nurses and led by Dr Frances Hughes, the sector moved early and strongly, before New Zealand went into lockdown, restricting visitors, implementing pandemic plans and initiating the critical 14-day isolation policy for all new resident admissions and re-admissions.

Dr Frances Hughes says that with their advanced clinical and operational expertise in the care of older people, the Nursing Leadership Group has led in setting Covid-19 policy and protocols, which have been welcomed by NZACA's more than 600 member facilities.

Nursing Leadership Group member Anna Blackwell, clinical director and co-owner of residential care facility Cook Street Nursing Care Centre in Palmerston North says Covid-19 has been all-consuming.

"Our nurses have had an enormous amount of information to absorb very quickly. But they've taken it in their stride, continuing to juggle complex clinical situations whilst ensuring life in the facility remains calm and as 'normal' as possible. The registered nurses have added technology into their skill set so residents can connect with their whanau, all the while leading a team of dedicated compassionate health care assistants and support staff who love what they do."

Dr Hughes says that aged care nursing is a specialised and rewarding field for nurses, supporting growth and development of so many different functions.

"There is scope to work holistically, and wonderful career pathways from junior nursing though to health management roles."

Group member Tanya Bish, Clinical Director of Metlifecare and specialist Gerontology Nurse, says aged care nurses bring humanity to health with the long-term therapeutic relationships built between nurses, residents, and their whanau.

"I love aged care nursing. Our residents give us as nurses the opportunity to practice and develop our clinical skills to a high level in an environment that is their home. The joy of being in an environment that is their home, means the ongoing therapeutic relationships are rewarding and lots of funny stories get shared due to the trust and rapport that builds between residents and their staff."

Mr Wallace says aged care nurses in New Zealand are undervalued for the vital work they do, some being paid \$10,000 per annum less than a comparable nurse in a public hospital, so as we head into an election campaign, the NZACA will be making the case for pay parity

The NZACA is marking International Nurses Day with a virtual event across more than 600 aged residential care facilities 'Zooming' in to thank and celebrate aged care nurses.

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