

**CoNNMO Member Meeting**  
**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026, 12.00md – 4:00pm**  
**Online Via Microsoft Teams**  
**MINUTES**

**1. Welcome, acknowledgement of country and introductions**

Members were welcomed to the meeting by Jen Bichel-Findlay, the CoNNMO Deputy Chair.

Jen acknowledged the traditional owners and custodians of the land she was on and where member representatives, invited guests and observers were participating in the meeting.

**2. Attendance**

Please see *2026 03 27 CoNNMO Member Meeting Attendance* in meeting papers

**3. Commonwealth Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer update**

**Samantha Lavender, Senior Nursing Advisor**

**Olivia Tierney, Senior Midwifery Advisor**

Samantha Lavender provided updates from the Commonwealth Office of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer including:

- RN prescribing implementation progress.
- Government funding to implement and evaluate 10 Birthing on Country services nationally.
- Increasing focus on the National Syphilis Response Plan (2023–2030) with rising cases, including congenital cases and infant deaths in 2025. A national coordinated response is under way, including roundtables focused on addressing barriers, cultural safety, and education.
- Continued efforts to implement the National Stillbirth Action Plan. Overall aim of the Plan is to reduce preventable stillbirths by 20% over 5 years through improved care standards, awareness, and targeted support for high-risk groups.
- Members were asked to sign up to the CNMO newsletter through the QR code provided on the slides to stay up to date with the work of the Commonwealth Chief Nursing and Midwifery Office. There is also a link on the CNMO website to do this.

**4. Commonwealth Department of Health Disability and Ageing update**

**Natalie Bekis, Assistant Secretary, Workforce Planning and Strategies Branch**

Natalie Bekis provided updates on key Commonwealth workforce initiatives including:

- The Primary Care Workforce Review Taskforce, led by Nick Morgan. This Taskforce is progressing key reforms including a review of national consistency in medicine use, GP diagnosis and treatment of ADHD, alongside a and a broader work plan being developed for Health Ministers.
- There is also ongoing work to expand prescribing scopes across professions, including pharmacists and podiatrists, and alignment efforts across jurisdictions, particularly linked to designated RN prescribing, with stakeholder engagement underway across the nursing sector to support nurse-led models of care.
- The Kruk review is nearing completion with final recommendations due by June, and the expedited IQRN pathway is seeing strong uptake with over 4,000 applications, 2,300 deemed eligible and nearly 1,400 registered, though a key gap remains in tracking where these nurses are being employed. Nurses who have gained their

- pre-registration qualifications in India entering via the UK pathway are the most common group of applicants.
- Aged care has now been integrated into the Health Workforce Division in the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, with 5 organisations delivering transition-to-practice programs of 6–12 months, enrolling 658 nurses and graduating 124 so far, with evaluation due by June 2027.
  - The 500 Nurse Entry Program has been launched nationally through Nepean Blue Mountains PHN, offering \$2,000 support per placement, with 96 practices engaged and 183 EOIs received, though uptake is still early and nurse practitioner participation remains limited due to supervision constraints.
  - The SA and WA Nurse Practitioner pilot programs showed strong outcomes including improved access, high patient satisfaction, reduced GP workload, and significant system efficiency gains, although barriers such as training, onboarding, scope limitations, and financial viability were identified.
  - Finally, the Complexity Review led by Sue Dawson has been submitted to Health Ministers, outlining 9 priority reforms and over 20 actions, with an implementation plan currently in development to guide future government decisions.

## **5. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia update**

### **Alley Peck, Executive Officer, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia**

Alley Peck provided an update from the Nursing and Midwifery Board noting:

- The National Scheme Strategy 2023, launched on 17th March, focuses on effective harm prevention, culturally safe healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and building a sustainable health workforce, guiding decision-making, investment and reform over the next five years.
- 2026 Registration Renewal preparations are underway with employer webinars, multi-factor authentication rollout, and enhanced renewal questions for midwives, with renewal opening early April and closing 31st May, followed by a late period in June.
- The Dawson Review is driving a transition to a national governance structure, replacing state and territory boards, with implementation expected by September.
- Designated RN prescribing is progressing, with four approved programs and first graduates expected mid to late 2026, while applications are open including trans-Tasman pathways.
- Ongoing work includes developing and implementing culturally safe care initiatives with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including CATSINaM, review of regulatory documents.
- Codes of conduct and EN/RN standards for practice are under review with strong stakeholder engagement, and updates expected later in 2026.
- Upcoming public consultations in April include the Registration Standard: Endorsement for scheduled medicines for midwives. Proposed changes include removal of the 5000-hour requirement and to introduce a 12-month application timeframe from completion of an approved course of study. A public consultation for review of the Safety and quality guidelines for privately practising midwives will occur simultaneously to reflect changes in PII for midwives occurring at the end of 2026.
- The streamlined pathway for internationally qualified registered nurses continues to reduce processing time to 1–6 months, with further improvements underway.
- Additionally, guidance is being developed on unregulated birth workers to clarify professional responsibilities, promote safe care, and provide consumer information.

## **6. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation update**

### **Alana Ginnivan, ANMF Federal Assistant Secretary**

Alana introduced herself as the newly appointed ANMF Federal Assistant Secretary and noted that Catelyn Richards from Tasmania has also recently been appointed as Federal Assistant Secretary.

Alana provided an update on ANMF Federal Office activities, including:

- The aged care work value case (2020–2024), noting the resulting pay increases for aged care nurses and

continued work of the ANMF to ensure these pay increases are adhered to.

- The ANMF application on 9 February 2024 to vary the Nurses Award 2020. Submissions and evidence were lodged on 20 March 2026, with responses due by 27 May 2026, and hearings scheduled from 10 June 2026. The application aims to modernise the award, including the inclusion of midwifery in the title (the Nurses and Midwives Award), improving pay rates in line with aged care increases, restoring pay progression for enrolled nurses, providing additional increases for nurse practitioners, and ensuring fairer progression for part-time and casual nurses based on years of service, with a five-year phased implementation.
- Discussions regarding aged care reforms not working as intended in some areas, and these concerns are being raised with ministers.
- Cost-of-living pressures on nurses and midwives and ANMF advocacy with ACTU to explore potential relief measures for members and workers more broadly.

## **7. Primary Care Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship Program Update**

### **Professor Leanne Boase, Managing Director of Grants and Scholarship Programs, Australian College of Nurse Practitioners**

Leanne Boase, Managing Director of Grants and Scholarship Programs, provided an update on behalf of Australian College of Nurse Practitioners noting:

- The Primary Care Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship Program is a postgraduate program covering graduate certificate, diploma, and Masters, with 1600 scholarships already delivered out of a target of 2250, including strong uptake in rural and regional areas. These are Australian Government-funded scholarships.
- The program aims to advance nursing and midwifery roles in primary care, build future workforce pathways, and measure real outcomes such as increased access to services and expanded scope of practice. Additional support includes cultural safety education modules, with eligibility requiring Australian citizenship or permanent residency and registration as a nurse or midwife.
- Scholarships provide up to \$30,000 for Masters and \$15,000 for other education streams, primarily covering tuition with options for placements and bursaries. Demand is high, with 438 applications already received this year and targets being exceeded through efficient funding utilisation.
- Additionally, the Aged Care Nursing Scholarship Program has recently been introduced, offering funding from Certificate III to Masters level, enabling career progression across all stages. In less than 12 months, over 500 scholarships have been awarded from more than 2700 applications under this \$21 million program.
- Unlike the primary care scholarships, applicants must be working in aged care, and employer support has been strong despite initial concerns. The program continues to see overwhelming demand, with scholarship allocations nearly fully utilised each cycle.

## **8. CoNNMO Chair and Secretariat Update, Member reports and Other Business**

### **Naomi Riley provided the Secretariat update noting**

- The last CoNNMO member meeting was held on 3 October 2025 in Sydney as a hybrid meeting. All meeting documents, including the minutes, were uploaded to the CoNNMO website. Members have reviewed the minutes, and no changes were requested.

### **Other business:**

- An update was provided on CoNNMO Council nominations and membership.
- CoNNMO council positions became vacant at the end of 2025 following the conclusion of Alison Weatherstone and Anita Taylor's terms, and their valuable contributions were acknowledged.

- Following the nomination process, Catherine Buchan (Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand) and Jennifer Harland (Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia) were welcomed as new council members.
- The Deputy Chair position became vacant, and Jen Bichel-Findlay was successfully appointed. It was also noted that the next cycle of council nominations is commencing, with two upcoming vacancies currently held by Meredith Cummins and Jen Bichel Findlay, both eligible to re-nominate, and a call for nominations to be circulated by the Secretariat.
- Membership updates confirmed. There are currently **62** member organisations, with no withdrawals since October, and positive re-engagement from several organisations following a data cleanse.
- A new membership application from Pain Nurses Australia (a not-for-profit established in 2021 focused on pain management education and practice) was presented, with Council recommending acceptance pending member approval. Members were asked to vote on the Pain Nurses Australia membership application by raising their hands, with 33 members voting in favour, none against, and no abstentions, resulting in the application being accepted.

#### **Member reports updates:**

- It was noted that members can provide their member report in the new digital form as part of the new process.
- An update was provided on member reports, noting that over 30 organisations have submitted reports, offering valuable insights into the work of nursing and midwifery organisations.
- It was also noted that upcoming conferences for organisations mentioned in the member report form will be updated on the CoNNMO website conference page.
- Feedback from previous meetings indicated strong interest in learning from other organisations, particularly around capacity building, which led Council to release an Expression of Interest (EOI) inviting organisations to share successful experiences in advocacy, collaboration, and engagement.
- Selected organisations will present their work as part of the meeting, and appreciation was extended to those who responded to EOI.
- Members were encouraged to participate in future EOIs, with reassurance that topics and presentation formats remain flexible. It was also noted that knowledge sharing from previous meetings has already led to tangible outcomes, including the College of Emergency Nursing Australasia appointing an acting executive officer, which has strengthened external advocacy and improved communication with members.
- Council emphasised the importance of continued information sharing to enhance organisational capacity and collective impact across the sector.
- Member Reports as tabled. Please see attachment *2026 03 27 – Member Reports*
- No other business was raised.

#### **Action Items:**

- Members have been asked to submit the member report by 2 April and it will be included in the meeting papers.
- Members to review the CoNNMO website conference page and send updates or corrections to the Secretariat.
- Members to share upcoming conferences or events with CoNNMO secretariat for posting.
- Secretariat to circulate the call for nominations for two vacant positions.
- Members to consider nominating for upcoming vacancies.
- Members have been asked to provide the feedback on today's meeting via the QR code which will be provided at the end of the meeting.
- Secretariat contact email [connmo@anmf.org.au](mailto:connmo@anmf.org.au)

#### **9. Spotlight on member organisation strategies for engagement, advocacy and collaboration**

In the lead up to the meeting, member organisations were invited to nominate to present at today's meeting on successful advocacy and collaborations. Thank you to Mitch Wall, Chief Commercial Officer, Strategic Growth and Partnerships ; Jennifer Harland - Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia and Fran Rice - Australian College of Nursing;

Sandra Code -The Australian & New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine; Adjunct Professor Kathryn Zeitz - Australian College of Nursing for nominating and taking part in this agenda item.

### **Nursing associations partnering in a shared value model**

**Mitch Wall, Chief Commercial Officer, Strategic Growth and Partnerships**

**Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association**

On behalf of *Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association*, Mitch provided an overview of nursing organisations partnering in a shared value model to deliver high value conferences to members and on behalf of the nursing profession, highlighting that collaboration should deliver either a big win for the nursing profession or a win-win for partners. This included:

- The Festival of Nursing 2026, a national platform attracting 800–1000 nurses annually, offering a revenue share model rather than sponsorship.
- A forward-looking opportunity for 2027 and beyond to address fragmentation by co-locating or integrating national nursing conferences, enabling shared venue and organiser costs, stronger sponsor value, better delegate experience, and a unified nursing voice. A proven example was the 2024 Essential Health Summit with 1100 delegates and 100 exhibitors.
- The strategic ask was to consider partnership for 2026 and open discussions for future collaboration.

### **Successful Collaborations**

**Jennifer Harland - Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia**

**Fran Rice - Australian College of Nursing**

Jen Harland provided an overview of the “Lead From Where You Are Program” implemented for DANA members in collaboration with and supported by Australian College of Nursing resources. Frances Rice provided ACN perspectives on this project. This included the steps to delivering this program:

- DANA identified key gaps through recurring “if only” challenges around member support and value proposition, particularly as a small, volunteer-led organisation with limited resources and diverse member needs across regions and subspecialties.
- In response, DANA partnered with the Australian College of Nursing (ACN) to leverage ACN’s leadership education platform and combine it with DANA’s specialty expertise. This collaboration resulted in a tailored six-month leadership program aimed at empowering nurses to lead from any role or setting, not just management.
- The program includes the Leaders Mindset Series as a foundation, interactive webinars with sector leaders, mentorship opportunities, development of a leadership statement, and conference presentation exposure.
- Feedback has been positive, and the partnership has enabled scalability and adaptation into other specialty areas.
- Overall, the update emphasised the importance of collaboration to amplify impact and deliver sustainable, high-value programs for members. The key action item was for organisations to identify their own “if only” challenges, reframe them into “how can we,” and actively explore partnership opportunities to enhance outcomes.

### **OHN Recognition Program**

**Sandra Code -The Australian & New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine**

On behalf of The Australian & New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine, Sandra Code provided a brief overview of the history of ANZSOM and the OHN Recognition program. This included:

- Sandra became the second recognised occupational health nurse in 2024 and reflected on a 40-year career across multiple organisations including Cadbury Schweppes and Pfizer.
- The recognition program is based on competency standards originally launched in 1991 and later aligned with ANZOM, noting that occupational health nurses are still not formally recognised in national data collection via the health workforce data.

- The recognition program aims to maintain high professional standards, support employers, and provide pathways for training and career development.
- Key features include ANZOM membership, a robust governance and assessment process, and recognition valid for three years.
- The scope of the role spans clinical care, compliance, and leadership responsibilities. Requirements include nursing qualifications, current registration, relevant experience, and demonstrated competencies with evidence.
- It was noted that currently five nurses have been recognised since 2023, with 19 in progress, and the process is detailed and can take several months but is highly rewarding.
- The update concluded by emphasising the ongoing impact of occupational health nurses in creating safe and healthy workplaces.

### **Successful advocacy to advance nurse-led care**

#### **Adjunct Professor Kathryn Zeitz - Australian College of Nursing**

On behalf of Australian College of Nursing, Adjunct Professor Kathryn Zeitz provided an overview of the value of cross-organisation collaborations to advance nursing and midwifery professions and elevate advocacy efforts.

This included:

- An update on the college's advocacy work, highlighting multiple collaborations with peak nursing organisations including the Australian College of Midwives, ANMF, CATSINaM, the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses, APNA, CRANAplus, Australian College of Nurse Practitioners and the Council of Deans.
- the "Nurses are the Solution" campaign: a series of case studies were developed to demonstrate real examples of nurse-led models of care, which were later compiled into a booklet and used as a key component of the pre-budget submission.
- collaborative advocacy efforts such as joint parliamentary inquiry submissions, opinion pieces, and coordinated media engagement, including strong promotion of nurse-led services like Melissa Freeman's wound care clinic.
- Emphasis on the importance of co-creating advocacy submissions to strengthen impact despite limited resources.
- The need to better explain the role and scope of nursing and midwifery across specialties was highlighted, along with the use of storytelling, media partnerships, and humanised narratives to improve public understanding.
- The value of coordinated media efforts, such as during the launch of designated RN prescribing, resulting in significant visibility and political support, including engagement from government representatives.
- The importance of ongoing collaboration, consistent messaging, social media presence, and follow-through with stakeholders was reinforced, with the goal of building a stronger unified voice, improving workforce retention, increasing respect for the profession, and ensuring greater representation of nurses and midwives in policy and decision-making forums.