

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**  
**26<sup>th</sup> CNMF BIENNIAL MEETING OF MEMBERS**  
26<sup>th</sup> September 2024



Good morning, and welcome to our Biennial Meeting. It is so good to see so many of you. Thank you, for travelling to the beautiful island of Malta. On behalf of everyone may I express sincere and grateful thanks to our planning team of Malta, Cyprus and UK, National Nurses Associations - and especially Jill our Exec Secretary who has coordinated it all from Australia. I have been kept informed throughout - again Many thanks to all.

Our last meeting was the 25th Biennial meeting which was on line in September 2022. So much has happened to us all in the last 2 years.

The CNMF has continued to work across the Commonwealth through our National Nurses Associations and we have faced many challenges some old and some new. But I know the strength and determination of our professional leaders has shone through and it is so good that many of these people are here with us today. We will hear the area reports from our Board members later - but please join with me to thank and acknowledge the NNA's for their contribution and leadership.

My 2023 began with a trip in early January to join 2,000 nurse members of the Trained Nurses of India at their 77th National Conference in Guwahati, Assam. This was an amazing experience and I met so many nurses from the north east of India, doing fantastic work in very picturesque areas but very challenging climate and environmental issues. The position of the TNAI within country was clearly well respected and representational of the profession and the strong leadership in the region and good works across the whole country. TNAI recently opened a museum at their HQ citing the history of the profession and I am sure we will hear a little more later today. Many thanks to TNAI President, Professor Roy George and Mrs Evelyn Kannan, Secretary General, for their leadership, friendship and hard work.

Many of our Board members have taken part in the Nightingale Initiative for Global Health (NIGH) *Global Nurses Voices* series during 2023. The initiative was supported by a number of organisations, including the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). I was delighted to represent CNMF on the very first of the series and many other CNMF Board members have followed, placing our work at the centre of the global nursing world. I want to acknowledge this contribution and thank my colleagues for engaging with this work.

Later in the year, we were delighted to have a nurse from Nigeria studying in the UK as a Commonwealth scholar. I was able, with Mr Raluke Ekezie from Nigeria, to attend Buckingham Palace to meet King Charles III, as we celebrated the work of international nurses and midwives in the UK. Raluke is studying 'Care of the Aged in Nigeria' and I am sure we will hear more about him and his work in the future. It was a splendid evening, recognising the contribution of the international nursing and midwifery workforce in the UK. Please let us see more nurses and midwives embarking on this opportunity to take up a Commonwealth scholarship.

Our profession is also facing many challenges across the Commonwealth in all of our countries low, middle and high income. Many of our colleagues are not fully recovered from the pandemic and we are now facing further strains of infectious diseases appearing across the globe, as well as changing patterns of disease. This has all contributed to increased levels of stress and burnout in all health care professionals - but quite significantly among nurses and midwives. Many trade unions and professional organisations are doing their

best to support individuals and groups who are vulnerable at this time. I am sure we will hear some of the work undertaken later on the agenda from our Board members. The effect of workforce issues, such as fewer staff to fulfil rosters etc, then plays out on the day to day issues of caring for more fragile and complex patients with multi co-morbidities both non communicable and communicable diseases.

I am also afraid to say there are increasing safety at work concerns among staff, particularly violence and aggression toward the workforce. This is on the increase and adding to the changing image and desirability of people to join the profession. Security of staff while on duty and travelling to and from their workplace is a concern across all health profession groups. We also have seen increases in bullying and harassment within the workplace; this cannot be tolerated and sound workable policies of whistleblowing and disciplinary action are needed.

Importantly however, we must not allow the profession to fall behind in the rapidly moving world of technology and ensure our new generations of nurses and midwives are equipped and educated in the use of these new tools and solutions. We must embrace this and see it as a benefit for our patients and families as we enhance care provision.

There are other key aspects which we will hear about during our conference and that is climate change and the increased position of regulation and inspection within and about the health provision we all need to work within.

Today is also an opportunity for me to speak a little bit about the Commonwealth Family that we are all part of. As we are here in Malta, who are leading on the focus of small island states within the Commonwealth, I wanted to draw your attention to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting about to take place in Samoa in October this year - 2024. The theme of the meeting is: *One Resilient Common Future - transforming our common wealth*. We know that health and education are key aspects of any countries wealth, so as the Commonwealth is one-third of the global population, we have access to a significant loud voice. The leveraging of the Commonwealth is a great advantage - our profession must engage this opportunity.

At the Commonwealth People's Forum, there are several established groups leading on matters which health care professionals have knowledge and expertise in, and will find interesting and useful to consider. There are a number of discussions going to take place that touch our working lives and, if possible, can I recommend you consider listening to the debate or reading the reports and work with your country colleagues to address the role of nurses and midwives in them. I know our NNA's leverage strength on a daily basis but consider furthering our voice louder within the Commonwealth family. We need through our NNA to hear the leadership voice of nurses and midwives as we all face the future considering the health inequalities and the sustainability of the populations we serve. Our professional integrity and advocacy is still needed and sought for by our communities, and throughout the Commonwealth we need to support and strengthen whenever possible this position.

We have some work to do and these next few days will help us all refresh our drive and commitment. I think I have a little longer to serve as your President - but I must say to you all, it is an honour to be your President and I extend my sincere thanks to you and your members for your support and the compassionate care you deliver every day.

Many thanks

Kath

Professor Kathleen McCourt CBE FRCN

President CNMF