



## The need to release the potential of nursing has never been greater

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Reading these powerful papers in previous issues of Praxis provides a salutary glimpse into the arduous journey that has been nursing in Aotearoa (NZ) in the last 30 years or so. Underlying all of these papers is a recognition that biomedicine alone will not achieve health for all. Nursing has a responsibility to act as an agent of transformation for delivering health care with a focus on epidemiology, equity and well-resourced primary health care which meets the needs of even the most vulnerable. Our journey has been one that has focussed (as we titled the Ministerial Taskforce on Nursing, 1998) on *Releasing the potential of nursing*. That agenda has recently been taken up by the **Nursing Now Campaign**, affirmed by the World Health Organization (WHO), and captured in the **State of the World's Nursing** report (WHO, 2020). The need to release the potential of nursing has never been greater.

We have had our own internal struggles to contend with, as outlined so clearly in Wilkinson's articles. Further, the voices in all of these articles have not always been heard nor embraced by all nurses. We still struggle with the antiquated and highly counterproductive notion that nurses who lead, who research, who carry out diverse roles away from direct patient contact have somehow lost touch, lost credibility, and should be silent. This dismissal is deeply ironic given that nurses who practice in direct care roles are almost always silent for a variety of reasons both good and bad.

Yet looking back a huge amount has been achieved. There has been significant development of clinical postgraduate education and an internationally enviable development of the Nurse Practitioner role free from many of the constraints which hamper the role in other countries. Prescribing at three different levels is well established with a simple goal to improve access to care. There is significant and genuine collaboration across all peak nursing bodies through the auspices of the National Nurse



Leaders Group which meets four times yearly to focus on strategic development for nursing. But there is so much more to be done.

As the philosopher Michel Foucault so clearly indicated, power is generated from the bottom up and through the micro activities of our daily actions. We hold the power in our hands to shape the future of nursing. We will achieve that through supporting, strengthening and above all trusting each other; as leaders, as clinicians, and in every role that nursing or nurses hold. We need to strengthen our capacity and engagement in the policy environment, drop forever our tendencies to silence and stay whole heartedly focussed on the reasons we chose nursing, so we make a difference to people's health and illness experience with skill, knowledge, evidence, passion, and compassion.

### References

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