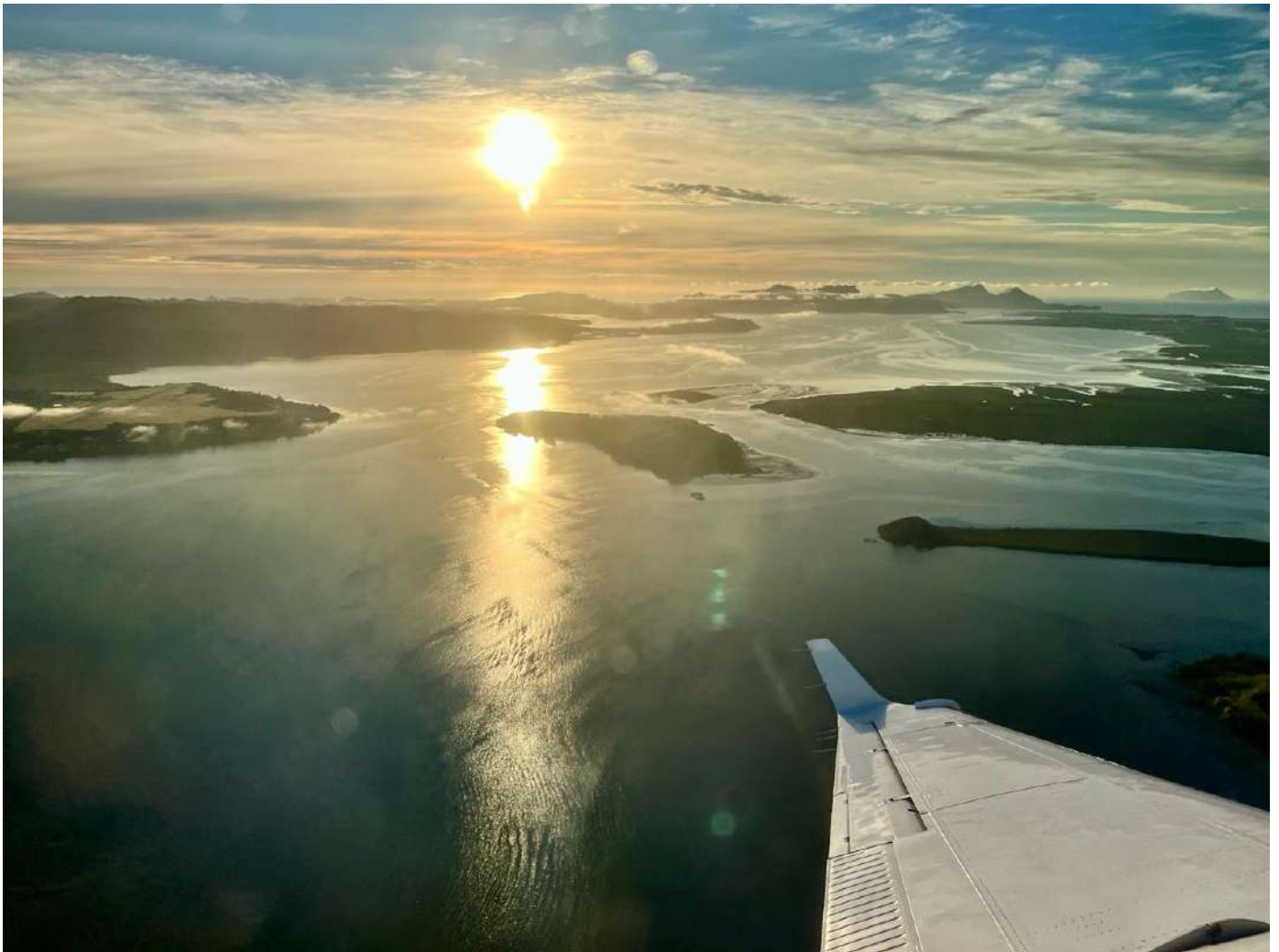


April 2025



*Photo Credit: Jason Wordsworth, Whangarei Flight Team.*

*Banking after departure from Whangārei Airport, Whangārei Heads in the distance.*



**College of Air and Surface Transport Nurses  
College of the New Zealand Nurses Organisation**

## From the Editor – Tania Parr



Kia ora koutou katoa,

Unbelievable that the chilly morning air is creeping up on us again already! I hope you have all managed some fun in the sun over the so-called summer!

With the chilly weather arriving, it means we are getting closer and closer to what sounds to be like a fantastic symposium coming up in Dunedin in October, so make sure you put in for some PDL days to attend, and why not present something? Have a great story? Had a challenge your team had to overcome? We want to hear from you. Check out the call for abstracts and be in to win a free registration to attend. Read on for more information.

This issue we have stories from the incredible COASTN retrieval course which was held in February, and an update from the ACP (Aeromedical Commissioning Programme) with a link to give your feedback, so please do have your say on shaping the future of Aeromedical Transport.

We have a bunch of fantastic updates from around the motu, with amazing photos, and a great story of a rural retrieval first. Thank you so much to everyone who has contributed. I know we are all busy, and I understand that this isn't high on your priority list, but as you can see through this edition, it really makes for a good read, and a good catch up with our Air and Surface Transport Whanau, so grab a cuppa, and have a good read.

As always, I need your stories, case studies, photos – please forward these to me at any time – The emag is published 3 times per year, the next due out in August 2025, so be sure to get snapping when you are out flying/on the road. [tania.parr@nmdhb.govt.nz](mailto:tania.parr@nmdhb.govt.nz)

Have a happy and chocolate filled easter with your whanau and friends.

Ngā Mihi

Tania

***Did you know that COASTN is on social media?***

***Find us on Facebook*** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/250823442046051/?ref=share>  
***and on Instagram*** <https://instagram.com/nznocoastn?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=>

## Chair Report – Lynette Will



With the days beginning to shorten and the autumn feel to the air it is as always hard to believe how quickly the year is moving.

The COASTN committee had our first face to face meeting for the year in February. We had a number of updates during the meeting which helped us to look at our plans for the year.

Paul Goulter, Chief Executive of NZNO, addressed the committee, outlining the significant challenges nurses face with the recent changes in Health NZ. He emphasised that the current government strategies do not align with NZNO values, particularly in terms of funding and resource allocation. Paul highlighted the need for equitable health systems and called for government accountability in ensuring that nurses are adequately supported and compensated.

The ACP program update was a focal point of the meeting. The committee was informed of the progress made to date and discussed suggestions for future directions. The ACP team had a meeting the following day and two of our committee sit on that group, so our voice is being heard at a high level. There will be an update from ACP in the near future and I encourage you all to have your say about the proposal they will release. It is crucial for the future of aeromedical work that Nurses voices are at the forefront of these new changes.

Mark your calendars for the upcoming COASTN Conference, themed Synergy in Motion, scheduled for October 16-17 2025 in Dunedin. This event promises to be an excellent opportunity for professional development and networking. Information for submitting abstracts will be available on the NZNO COASTN website in April. If you have heard any speakers lately who you think our members would benefit from hearing let me know at [coastnflight2023@gmail.com](mailto:coastnflight2023@gmail.com)

Stay tuned for more updates and make sure to have your say in shaping the future of nursing in New Zealand. Your participation is vital in ensuring that nursing remains at the forefront of healthcare changes.

Yours in Transport

Lynette Will COASTN Chair

The COASTN committee met with Kate at our last Face to Face meeting in Wellington, and we suggested the Ambulance Team might like to give an update to our members in our e mag. So here it is! Make sure you click the link and have your say.

The Aeromedical Commissioning Programme is facilitating the design of the future operating model for the air ambulance service.

Over the past six months, we have been working with Design Working Groups and the Programme's Clinical and Technical Advisory Group to develop a draft future operating model. This included identifying areas for further consultation with the sector.

## **Engagement**

We invite you to provide feedback on the draft future operating model through a link on our Aeromedical Commissioning Programme [webpage](#). This link will take you to a platform where you will find a PDF document of the proposed future operating model.

We have provided specific questions for feedback and in some sections multiple options are presented for your consideration. We look forward to hearing about your preferred options.

Feedback is open from 14 April 2025 to 11 May 2025.

We encourage you to share this opportunity with your networks, as we want to hear from those with involvement or an interest in the New Zealand air ambulance sector.

## **About the engagement:**

- Engagement is open to anyone with an interest in the New Zealand air ambulance sector.
- You can submit as an individual or group.
- You can provide feedback on the entire document or specific sections. You do not have to answer all questions.
- You may wish to download the PDF and reflect on the questions before answering. We advise you complete the survey questions in one sitting to ensure your answers are saved.
- You will be asked what you think are the priority changes for the air ambulance sector at the end of the questions. You will be able to rate and comment on other people's answers. This section will be visible to everyone, all other answers are visible only to the Ambulance Team.

We are keen to identify which shifts will make the biggest impact for the service and deliver improved patient and community outcomes.

## Next steps

Your feedback will form the basis of recommendations that will go to Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora and ACC leadership teams for approval.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone in the sector who has been involved in the design process so far and has contributed their input. In particular, we would like to thank the flight nurse representatives across the design process for their time and contributions. These are:

Clinical and Technical Advisory Group.

- Avryl Way
- Tania Parr
- Germaine Sandford

Design Working Groups

- Jackie Hardy, Assets and Infrastructure
- Toni Johnston, Workforce
- Andy Gibbs, Dispatch and coordination and governance
- Sarah Rodgers, Dispatch and coordination and governance

In advance, we thank those who will take the time to review the document and provide considered feedback as part of this broad sector consultation process. We are looking forward to this engagement and hearing the voice of the sector.

## Contact us

Please contact us if you have any questions or feedback on this work via email: [airambulanceteam@TeWhatuOra.govt.nz](mailto:airambulanceteam@TeWhatuOra.govt.nz).

Kate Randhawa and Jon Gaupset

## COASTN Award

Just a reminder to start thinking about who you would like to nominate for the 2025 COASTN Nurse of the Year award. This award celebrates excellence in nursing in the field of air and surface transport. We want to know who you think is going above and beyond, and we want to know why you think they deserve to win this special award. Nomination forms can be found on the COASTN website [COASTN Conferences](#)



## Regional Updates



New Zealand  
Air Ambulance  
Service

Life saving care in the air

And just like that ... it is Autumn! The start of Autumn saw the commencement of the new NZAAS after-hours and weekend aeromedical service in Taranaki. This signals an expansion of the current NZAAS national flight service and coordination, offering increased aeromedical capabilities for the Taranaki region. As part of this growth, we have welcomed several new members to the team, including a team of new locally based flight nurses and pilots. It is a privilege to support these nurses as they transition into the world of aeromedicine with a combination of ground school, equipment competencies and buddy flights. This ensures that all are well prepared to take their critical care expertise into the aeromedical and transport environment, all under the NZAAS clinical governance and guidance of Dr Shay McGuinness and Dr Ross Freebairn.

Our nursing teams embrace a diversity of missions available to them, from our national fixed wing service and ECMO, to the NZAAS jet service across the Pacific and worldwide international commercial transfers. Each type of transport presents unique challenges and requires specialized skills, reinforcing the fact that not two transfers are ever the same. We all continue to learn and grow.

Safe flying everyone, I'll leave you with some photos taken from recent Taranaki flights.

Angela and the NZAAS teams.



## Whangarei Flight Team

Kia Ora from the Whangārei ICU Flight Team,

Our flight team continues to experience a high volume of transfer requests, and we are currently orientating seven new nurses to our nurse-only fixed-wing transfer service. This team expansion plays a part in ensuring the population of Te Tai Tokerau continues to benefit from access to timely and specialist healthcare across our region.



*Morning light, Whangārei Airport*



*Whangārei Heads and Bream Bay*

A recent highlight for our flight team was a repatriation mission, transferring a patient from Dunedin ICU to Whangārei ICU— one of the longest possible hospital-to-hospital flights within New Zealand. The teamwork and preparation required for this transfer provided significant opportunities for our team's growth and professional development.

We are also thrilled to welcome Reshmi to the team, who has recently completed her orientation as a flight nurse.

As we continue to provide essential care in the skies above Te Tai Tokerau and Aotearoa, we look forward to further opportunities for growth and development as the winter season approaches.

Stay safe and well!

Ngā Mihi,

Jason Wordsworth



*Helimed 4 on a temporary pad at Rawene Golf Course*

## Hawkes Bay Flight Team



What an incredible start to the year! It's hard to believe that Easter is just around the corner. I once found it amusing to hear that time seems to fly faster as we age, but now I see the truth in it—it truly feels like the days are slipping through my fingers.



As we step into the upcoming months, it's encouraging to witness the steady flow of our aeromedical transfers, which are holding strong compared to previous years. We are making use of our flights like never before, responding to an increasing number of urgent acute transfers, managing routine ones, and navigating the constraints of bed availability, all while feeling the weighty pressure to return discharged patients to their homes.

Despite our best efforts, we are still grappling with the persistent challenge of expanding our full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. This critical issue often goes unnoticed, and the ongoing recruitment freeze adds yet another layer of complexity to our situation. However, it's important to acknowledge our resilience in the face of these challenges, a testament to our team's dedication and strength.

One of our biggest challenges—pardon the pun—lies in the transportation of bariatric patients. We must ensure patient safety during transit, as well as that of the flight staff involved. Recently, we undertook the urgent transport of a critically ill patient via fixed-wing aircraft.



With multiple comorbidities, he weighed 190 kg and had a width of 75 cm, painting a



vivid picture of the logistical hurdles we face. This experience highlights the indispensable role that our aeromedical flights from Hawke's Bay and across New Zealand play in delivering urgent medical care, a role that each of you plays a crucial part in.

On a lighter note, our staff had the pleasure of attending the Industry Open Day at Napier Airport and the HBHRT Open Day on February 22. The day was filled with positive feedback, enthusiasm for the job we do, and heartfelt appreciation for the vital work that we do. I've attached a couple of photos capturing the spirit of the day.

Jackie Hardy CNM Flight and Transport

## Wellington Aeromedical Retrieval Service or WARS!

Greetings from Te Whanganui a Tara!

We've continued to be a very busy service – day and night, with occasional less hectic shifts. There continues to be some challenging patient transfers as well as the less challenging. Late December we did a very long road transfer for this reason – a 2 day mission with very complex pre-planning for a bariatric patient that we exhausted all flight options on.

We continue to have a flight co-ordinator every day 0800 to 1630, except on public holidays. Our Flight nurse numbers have increase to 3 per day (staggered starts and end times) along out one on call at night. This is for a trial period to supplement the new aircraft capacity Life Flight now has. Coming up we also have our Wellington flight course, end of April. We are looking forward to seeing those attending from around the region.

Wellington Airport is currently doing runway work which has been impacting on response times for fixed wing transfers at night. Each evening Life Flight reposition an aircraft at Paraparaumu (40 mins by road) so that we can still fly. Otherwise, for our nearer transfers we use the rotor wing or road if the Cook Straight isn't in the way we can road.

We recently had our annual Core Competency day and it was great to have most of the team together for the day. It's our only opportunity for a team photo and a bit of fun while we ticked off the very important health and safety training, aircraft safety and crew resource management. Our NICU flight ACNM updated us on newborn resuscitation (in case that pre labour delivers en route)! A highlight was "Infection Control Bingo" with our IPC games master – our competitive natures came to the fore as we competed for chocolate.



The WARS nurses with our best smiles!



Many of you will also be getting new helicopters. Our new 145 won't be flying til later in the year but meanwhile our much loved HLF has retired.

Here is Becky, with pilot and crew on her last flight in HLF. We have a temporary stand in IRU.



## Life Flight Open Day

Life Flight had its highly anticipated open day on Sunday March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Enormous crowds turned up to join in all the fun. There were emergency services giving demos including; Airport Fire Service demonstrating their water canon trucks, the Life Flight Heli winch demos, customs dogs showing off their skills, and many more. Entertainment included children's face painting, meeting the Hurricanes players and mascot, music from the Royal New Zealand Marching band, and lots of food trucks. Aircrafts were on display including the only P-51D Mustang in New Zealand. Participants were able to get in and have a look around the fixed-wings and heli. We had the NICU and ICU displays where lots of families could try out their skills on bagging our mannequin- Crash, see their SpO<sub>2</sub> & listen to their lungs with a stethoscope, which was very popular. And you as you can see in the photo, we've upskilled one of our Life Flight Crewies to intubate Crash Kelly!



## New Zealand Flying Doctors Service – Nelson/Whakatū

Kia Ora from Sunny Nelson,

The Nelson flight nurse team continues to be busy busy, and of late have had a few more interesting trips around the country, heading to Invercargill twice in a week! We seem to have a lot of our older population heading off on road trips, and ending up in hospitals around the country. Its always nice to venture further afield than our usual

Nelson/Blenheim/Christchurch/Wellington routes. Flight nurse Kier enjoyed spectacular views of Mt Cook on his trip to Invercargill last week.

We are sadly now back to no coordinators on the weekends, so Saturdays and Sundays are a challenge for our flight nurses. It does cause quite a delay to the start of any transfers, and the flight nurse day can very quickly become a long one.

I'm sure you've seen a lot about Nelson Hospital in the news, and I'm sure our stories are no different to how many other hospitals in the country are at present. I think its important we all work through this together, check in with our colleagues, and lets hope we can get some change happening for us all sooner rather than later.

Planning is well underway for our Wairau Road nurse team to have a road transport training day – as they practice independently it's a valuable opportunity for them to come together share ideas, and problem solve, whilst doing some hands on learning through scenarios. We have road nurses rostered Monday to Friday 0800-1630hrs, and they are available to help with tarmac transfers to and from Woodbourne Airport for appropriate patients. We have found it saves around an hour having a tarmac at Woodbourne.

We wish you all a happy easter! And may your days be not too chilly just yet!



*Mount Cook/Tekapo – Kier Escario*

## New Zealand Flying Doctors Service – Christchurch/Otautahi

Kia ora from Otautahi and the Canterbury Air Retrieval Service (CARS),

The first quarter of this year has been busy with a steady stream of patients as well as a significant number of comings and goings of staff. This means that we are currently recruiting flight nurses, and it has been encouraging to see such a high level of interest from some great candidates within our ICU nursing team. In addition, CARS have welcomed back Becky who rejoins us as a flight co-ordinator. We say farewell to Francine and wish her all the best for her time in the northern hemisphere, and we also say farewell and good luck to Hilary and Chantelle in their new ICU ACNM roles.

CARS was lucky to receive funding from the NZFDS trust to send one of our nurses to COASTN's retrieval course in February. Feedback from Valentina was extremely positive.....

*"I personally found this course very useful in many ways. It was a great opportunity to connect with other flight nurses around the country, including one nurse from Australia, and to be able to share knowledge and experience with each other. I found it very interesting hearing about how other flights services operate and reflecting together on the challenges we face and different job opportunities our places of work have to offer. Most importantly, I found the overall content of the course rich, informative and very well delivered by various speakers. The entire week just flew by, and the organisers made sure we had no chance of getting bored. It's worth mentioning that the SIMS day was outstanding. It was by far the best simulation training I have ever been involved in. It was challenging, thought provoking, interesting and exciting all at the same time. I certainly walked away from that day with plenty of learning points."*

Another change for CARS this year has been the introduction of a new phone system – some of you may have encountered the pre-recorded message when you've spoken with our flight co-ordinators. We thank you all for your patience as we all get used to it. The goal of using this system is to enable us to do conference calls – and already we have found this beneficial to enable group calls between referring clinicians, accepting consultants and the retrieval team. In particular, this has helped clarify required time frames and urgency for patient transfers. This is a starting point for us and we look forward to seeing how it evolves and changes over the coming year.

Safe flying, the CARS team



## Dunedin Critical Care Flight Team

Greetings from Te Tai Tokerau.

The summer season can often be a little busier for the Southern Critical Care flight team with an influx of holidaymakers into the adventure playground of Central Otago and the return of visiting cruise ships for the season. This equates to an increase in patients requiring transfer out from smaller regional / community-based hospitals (such as Lakes District hospital in Queenstown and Dunstan hospital in Clyde) to larger facilities in Dunedin or Christchurch. A degree of the urgent work is covered by Paramedic-led teams where the patients are suitable to be managed under their CPGs and/or may be time-critical (e.g. SCR presentations, STEMI, etc) – because there is a heli base in Queenstown staffed with CCPs & Paramedics – which reduces the time to tertiary care by around an hour (cuts out the Dunedin to Queenstown leg of the journey if our were to undertake the transfer).

With Milford Sound being the first part of NZ that cruise ships approach coming at the end of their 2-3 day voyage across the Tasman its not unusual for us to receive a pleas for assistance to evacuate an unwell passenger from the ship. If we're luck the call come the day / evening prior – to allow for a little planning as flying into Milford to retrieve a patient is a bit of a challenge! For a start: ships do not dock in the Sound (first port is usually Dunedin the following day) so there is careful planning in arranging a time for the team to be on the ground just prior to the ship arriving. It's a longish flight a lot of restrictions: requiring extra fuel loads (stopping along the way to achieve this), terrain restrictions (jumping over high passes to access the Sound), limited space on the tender / boat that comes to collect us from shore (as we cannot land on the majority of the cruise ships)..... and of course this is all governed by weather! Often there is no capacity to take a flight nurse – as space is limited (by weight = fuel consumption) because logistically an extra Paramedic (in a loadmaster-type role) is sometimes of more use when you see the logistics of physically extracting a patient from the cruise ship (i.e. carrying your intubated & ventilated multi-vasopressor-dependent patient down 2 flights of narrow stairs (sometimes after removing the handrails) then onto the tiny wee tender vessel.....). However lately the flight nurses have

had increased opportunity due to the nature of the unwell patient & the need for managing multiple infusions & en route cares.



The photos provided came from Flight Nurse Adriana Gonzales – showing one (of our 8 EMS / IHT equipped helis) parked at the Milford Sound tourist base, and another showing the tender vessel on which the patient was transferred from ship to shore (you can just see the cruise ship in the distance – dwarfed by the stunning Mitre Peak). The patient was very unwell secondary to sepsis..... but the ironic thing was the boat had been docked in Dunedin the prior day, so if she had collapsed at that time the Milford mission would not have been required!



Now – who could wish for a better office?

In addition to the scenic trips the Southern Critical Care flight team has undertaken our annual safety & CRM education, with new iterations of the EC145 helicopters added to the fleet there are now 4 different types of rotary wing airframe for us all to familiarise ourselves with, in addition to our fixed wing. Training days are always great team building opportunities – strengthening the ties with our rotary & fixed wing providers (who are very much an extension of our ICU family & clinical team!).

Helicopters Otago, HEMS NZ & Skyline all fulfil a vital role in getting us clinicians and our patients to where we need to be, and we couldn't do our jobs without them. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have such a close working relationship with this extended part of our ICU transport team, and work hard to maintain that. Hopefully those of you who are travelling south to attend the COASTN symposium in Dunedin in September may have time for us to show you around our bases & the opportunity to meet some of our people.

We also want to celebrate the 3 nurses that recently completed the COASTN flight nurse course: Sam Collis, Courtney Herian & Bibin Kaduppil Babu who did us proud! Thanks to the COASTN committee for selecting & enabling them to attend. Although we provide our own extensive training there is huge merit in being able to hear from other flight nurses & service providers, and the opportunity to network less formally outside the structure teaching programme continues to prove invaluable. Cheers to Course Coordinator Helen Poole, Taz Irvine-Fynn & all the other parts of the faculty for their hard work in making these courses such a success.

Toni Johston – NP, Southern Critical Care Flight Team

## Dunedin NICU Transport update

Three months into the year already, January saw us complete 5 missions – 3 Fixed wing transfers and 2 Heli retrievals. February the same with 5 missions also 2 Fixed wing and 3 Heli retrievals. March has been a little busier with 11 flights – 8 Heli and 2 Fixed wings along with 1 road retrieval due to bad weather. We also had a visit from the Starship ECMO team to retrieve a baby from us.

Currently we are in the process of getting our new NXTGen incubator certified which has been a long process from initially ordering it a couple of years ago. This Incubator has a Hamilton ventilator and Aernox system for Nitric Oxide administration which is fantastic for the lower South Island as previously have been unable to provide this on retrievals.

The team continues to be well staffed with 12 experienced retrieval nurses covering Heli retrievals and transfer as well as 4 staff who help provide the transfers via the fixed wing aircraft with Skyline.

## Whanganui Flight Team

Hi from Whanganui,

Hope everyone has had a great summer, and ready to roll with the cooler months, nice to fly into different cities at this time of year and see the autumn colours coming through,

We are ticking along here in Whanganui, working our way through all the Health New Zealand changes that are currently upon us, we have remained steady with our work and have had increasing numbers of road transfers across to midcentral for procedures. Thank goodness for our PTS service who make those trips efficient, smooth and without delay.

It's nice to catch up with our regional partners on our morning zooms, to check in and maintain the regional relationships, certainly seems to help with flow, and efficiency, and is a great way to utilise the wealth of knowledge around the region.

Wishing everyone a safe and not too chilly winter season from the beautiful river city



## COASTN Aeromedical Retrieval Course 2025



Hello to you all! What a wonderful week we had with the flight course in Auckland. We started our week in AUT Manukau with a lot of apprehensive faces in the classroom. By the end of day 2 the fear was broken and excitement built for the week ahead. What a wonderful group of flight nurses I had the pleasure to facilitate this course to, you all had amazing positivity to the entire week with incredible experiences to share willingly throughout the course.

Our first two classroom days were full and informative offering the students' new perspectives to the many complex facets of air retrieval. A huge 'thank you' must go to all the speakers who gave up their time to speak to the students. Their knowledge and experience meant the students benefitted from a wide range of information unique to our field.



Day 3 involved the HUET training at Denray Marine..... I'll say no more about that other than its a love/hate experience! Denray were amazing with the students and a great day was had



by all. Day 4 was gearing up to be a long one on the SIM Day but WOW what a day!! Everyone did so well, and I know the feedback from this has been extremely positive. A huge thank you must go out to Taz, Toni, Ange, Lina, Jess and Mailei - the SIM team! Taz you organised and ran an amazing day and it wouldn't be complete without the entire team to bring it together so thank you all. I can't forget our incredible pilots - Martin and Beau, we LOVE you guys! So adaptable with Oscar nominations in the pipeline! But the Oscar must go to Ange, our actor extraordinaire! Pics to follow LOL.

Our last day was spent with the wonderful Stu out in Muriwai for SOS survival training, such an awesome day to finish an incredible week. Some new skills learned by all and lots of laughs, Stu brings out the best in us all.

This has been my first Aeromedical Course as the coordinator, I had BIG boots to fill after Taz ran it for so long. Despite the immense work involved in organising the week, it has been an incredible start! My thanks go out to New Zealand Air Ambulance service - the week wouldn't work without your incredible ongoing support and generosity; even last-minute panic's Angela helped us out!! AUT for the use of the campus facilities and all the SIM gear, again this week wouldn't work without their help and support. The SIM team and

NZAAS pilots - no words!! Lastly my thanks and gratitude to the amazing students of the 2025 course, you were all incredible and I feel so lucky to have had such a motivated and enthusiastic group of flight nurses from NZ and Aus.

The 2026 course dates will be posted in the not-too-distant future, and I can't wait to meet more amazing flight nurses.

Helen Poole

COASTN Aeromedical Flight Course  
Coordinator





## COASTN Course Reflection

In February 2025, I was privileged to attend the week-long COASTN Aeromedical Retrieval Course in Auckland. Attending the course was an invaluable experience as it gave me both in-depth education and practical, hands-on experience needed to manage a variety of emergencies in an aeromedical setting. Beyond clinical education, the course emphasized the importance of teamwork



and safety during aeromedical retrievals. One of my personal highlights was networking with other New Zealand and Australian flight nurses and building relationships. We were fortunate to have such an amazing crew!

The course covered various topics, including managing altered physiology at altitude and dealing with complex medical situations during air transport. Understanding how the human body responds in low-oxygen conditions and how altitude impacts patient care was crucial in learning how to ensure optimal outcomes during flights. The course also covered the many flight stressors you may encounter during retrievals, such as turbulence and variations in cabin pressure, which can affect both personal performance and the patient's well-being.

Another important focus was Crew Resource Management (CRM), emphasizing effective communication, leadership, and teamwork. Aeromedical retrievals often involve multiple professionals working together in high-pressure situations. CRM promotes smooth crew collaboration, allowing for more efficient decision-making and better patient outcomes.



One of the course's most challenging (but rewarding) parts was the Helicopter Underwater Escape Training (HUET). I'm not going to lie- this training pushed me well out of my comfort zone. But completing it gave me so much more knowledge and confidence should there ever be an emergent landing where the helicopter submerges underwater. In case of an emergency landing in water, we were taught how to evacuate the aircraft safely, simulating real-life situations, which I believe is a vital skill. Now, every time I step into the helicopter (and fixed wing), I remind myself of my "escape" strategies and options in case an emergency ever occurs.

We also had the opportunity to participate in simulation training, which was incredible learning as the situations felt real. The hands-on scenarios matched the complexities and unforeseen events encountered during aeromedical retrievals, challenging us to think on our feet while ensuring patient safety. They allowed you to refine your decision-making abilities and practice responding to realistic emergencies in a controlled, non-judgemental environment. It taught you how to keep yourself safe while ensuring you can provide the highest level of patient care during every transport.

Another part of the course I really enjoyed was the survival skills training. This included learning essential survival skills in remote, isolated or challenging outdoor environments. Learning practical strategies for navigating and surviving the outdoors with a focus on shelter construction, fire-starting, water procurement, and improvised basic first aid. Along with team building, learning these survival life skills has helped me better prepare for the unexpected during flights.

In retrospect, this course was one of my most valuable learning experiences. Although it presented many challenges, it gave me the knowledge and skills to be a better flight nurse. I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity and the amazing colleagues I trained alongside.

Lastly, I would like to thank the course coordinators and instructors for their dedication and expertise to the aeromedical course and for putting together such a well-structured course.

Hazel

Waikato - Intensive Care Unit

Registered Nurse | Clinical Coach



### Making history from Life Flight Hamilton base



On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025 I was fortunate to be part of an historic transfer of a patient from Taumarunui to Auckland by fixed wing.

Patient transfers from Taumarunui is not an unusual event as many patients are transported by bus and ambulance to Waikato hospital. Helicopter transfers are common for very ill patient and are either Helicopter crew and paramedic or ICU team retrievals.

Taumarunui is a unique place to retrieve patient from for several reasons. Firstly, it is remote, in the hills and it is often raining with low clouds or fog.

Our smaller communities are often left with low level forms of transportation which can be long and tedious and very uncomfortable for many patients.

There is no reason not to try and improve transports to and from Taumarunui. The flight may only be 20 minutes to Hamilton but then we do many transfers from Whakatane which is only 25 minute away and Tauranga also 20 minutes away and yet we do not think twice about sending an aircraft to these places which also involves a relatively lengthy road transport to and from the hospital.

Avryl Way has been instrumental in proposing a faster and more comfortable form of patient retrieval for the people of Taumarunui. Together with the Taumarunui hospital, Life Flight and St John ambulance it was decided to commence a regular flight for the patients from there.

There was a lot of excitement getting everything sorted. The staff at the hospital



Trial "patient" Charge Nurse Manager Sarath Surendran with Flight Operations Manager for Life Flight Luke Rohloff and Interim Nurse Manager, Community and Southern Rural Hospitals Lisa Maxwell.

were excited and very keen on getting things ready for us. A few phone calls with encouragement and requests of what we needed in the way of documentation and medications. Also a plan with St John was made in case we could not land at the aerodrome in Taumarunui the patient would have to go by road to Hamilton and we would then fly the patient to Auckland from there.

I arrived at Hamilton airport early on the Thursday morning and prepared to set out. The weather appeared to be favourable, and we planned to land at 0800hrs.

We took off from Hamilton with a few scattered clouds and flew to Taumarunui. I have often been there by road or helicopter but never had such a beautiful view of the town and surrounding area as on that lovely morning. The clouds were high and the hills green with sheep grazing. We flew over the town and people were coming out of the building to have a look at our plane flying low to



approach the grass runway between the hills. The approach was clear, and a perfect landing made. At the end of the runway, we were greeted by the 'weather lady' who we had called just before take-off to make sure that we would be able to land. I am sure she must have stood on her porch and had a good look around and reported to us. That is the most reliable weather report without instruments.

The St John ambulance was waiting for us with the patient and two of his relatives. They were all very excited and happy to be part of such an historic occasion. Pictures were taken and the patient was brought onboard the aircraft. More relatives were parked at the aerodrome, and we were waved off by the small but very excited group of spectators.

Perhaps on a national scale a small event but one that hopefully will be a changing point for rural New Zealand patient retrievals as we fly into 2025.



John Jenje, Life Flight nurse. ICU transport nurse. Photos supplied by Avryl Way.



Kia ora colleagues,

December 2024 saw the launch of Module 11 – Interhospital transport (IHT) within the eLearning Induction Programme for Critical Care in New Zealand (EPICCNZ) suite.

EPICCNZ is the first interactive eLearning resource accessible to staff new to critical care working within Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora. EPICCNZ has a range of modules including core knowledge needed to work in the speciality, body system modules to help manage and care for those with critical illness and speciality modules where needs of specific populations are covered.

The IHT module has been developed with the expert input from many IHT teams across the motu, thank you for either sending your orientation documents, giving permission to use your images or providing expertise in reviewing the module, we couldn't have done it without you! This module is intended to be undertaken alongside practical education and competency development so that every person new to IHT, can access the same high-level induction.

The IHT module is accessible across all three LMS platforms, located within the EPICCNZ homepage. It will take approximately 1-2 hours to complete.

Connect Me - [EPICCNZ Programme](#)

Ko Awatea - [EPICCNZ Programme](#)

HealthLearn - [EPICCNZ Programme NAEC100](#)

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Be sure to submit your abstracts to us at [COASTNflight2023@gmail.com](mailto:COASTNflight2023@gmail.com) by the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2025 to go in the draw to win a free registration to: Synergy in Motion – Working together for patient excellence.

One free registration spot has been kindly sponsored by the team at Dunedin Airport.

# COASTN Committee 2025



Back Row: Sam, Andy, Patrice, Lynette, Tania and Jackie. Front Row: Avryl and Jodie (absent: Annie)

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