

**Partnerships for a Healthy Region (PHR)
Strengthening Health Workforce in the Pacific (Nursing and Midwifery) (SHWP)**

Brief 7: Tonga Nursing Regulation Workshop – 2nd – 3rd September 2025

Background

The Tonga Country Workshop took place between September 2nd-3rd, 2025 in Nuku'alofa, Tonga with 45 participants (44 female 1 male) joining from the Ministry of Health (MoH), Tonga Nursing Board, Tonga Nurses Association, Tonga National University, hospitals and health clinics, other key partners, senior nurses and midwives and outer island province representatives from Ha'apai, Vava'u and 'Eua. This workshop forms part of the Strengthening Health Workforce in the Pacific (SHWP) Program under the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) five-year Partnerships for a Health Region (PHR) initiative (2024-2028). The WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing, Midwifery & Health Development at University of Technology Sydney (WHO CCNM UTS) manages the SHWP program, in partnership with South Pacific Chief Nursing & Midwifery Officers Alliance (SPCNMOA). The SHWP Program aims to strengthen Pacific health systems to improve the quality of and access to health care and population health across the Pacific, in line with the State of the Worlds Nursing Report 2025, and Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery.

Purpose and Approach

In 2025, WHO CCNM UTS and Fellows from the Pacific Leadership Program (PLP) will facilitate workshops in all 13 countries involved in SHWP. These workshops are led by 2024 and 2025 PLP Fellows set up a taskforce to engage national actors and stakeholders in identifying system-level strengths and challenges across education, regulation, service delivery, governance, to establish a common understanding and co-develop and prioritise actions for strengthening nursing and midwifery registration, regulation, and workforce planning through multi-stakeholder collaboration and regional alignment.

Workshop Objectives

1. *To explore and understand the framework for professional regulation*
2. *To examine and discuss country traffic lights action plan and strategy (SOWN 2020 & 2025)*
3. *To assess regulatory status against the regulatory framework to determine the work priorities (SDNM P3)*
4. *To agree on priorities and a plan of action.*
5. *Collect baseline data for GEDSI and raising awareness of GEDSI principles*



Workshop participants and WHO CCNM UTS Team with Hon. Minister for Health Dr Ana Akauola and Ms Alison Gow (First Secretary for Development, Australian High Commission).

Activity 1: Strategic Orientation and Leadership

Engagement

WHO CCNM UTS Team met with Chief Nursing Officer, Sr Mele Filise, members from the Tongan SHWP, Taskforce including PLP Fellows from 2024, 2025 and past programs, to discuss the meeting objectives and orient the structure of activities. Meetings were also held with WHO CCNM UTS, and key stakeholders including DFAT and MFAT and reporting to WHO Minister.



SHWP Tonga Taskforce Members

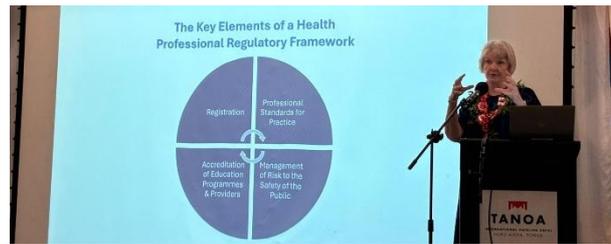
Workshop formalities were opened by Sr Akesa Halatanu (past PLP Fellow and Matron), who introduced the guest of honour and other dignitaries. The opening prayer was conducted by Rev Ikani Tolu (Nursing Board Member). Special remarks were given by the Hon. Minister of Health, Dr Ana Akauola (Guest of Honour) and Ms Alison Gow (First Secretary for Development, Australian High Commission).



Dignitaries during workshop opening (left to right). CEO Ministry for Health Dr. Reynold 'Ofanoa, Sr. 'Akesa Halatanu, Rev. 'Ikani Tolu, Mrs Lata Malu (former CNO Tonga), Hon. Minister of Health Dr. 'Ana 'Akauola, First Secretary for Development, Australian High Commission Ms. Alison Gow, Mrs Ana Kavaefi (former CNO)

Both special guests spoke on the importance of nursing and midwifery in Tonga, and the commitment to strengthening the health workforce. Sr Selini Soakai gave thank you remarks to all distinguished guests and participants. An evening event was held for special guests and participants to network after the day's session.

Activity 2: System Review and Regulation



Prof. Jill White (WHO CCNM UTS) presenting Regulation Framework

Prof. Michele Rumsey (WHO CCNM UTS) was asked by Chief Nursing Officer, Sr Mele Inu Filise, to begin the meeting by presenting SHWP's background and context, and Tonga's Traffic Light Action Plan, including SOWN 2020/25 data. These Traffic Lights were amended throughout the workshop to reflect Tonga's current position and priority actions.

Deliberations on system reviews and regulation were introduced by Prof. Jill White (WHO CCNM UTS), presenting the framework for Health Professional Regulation - the five areas of regulation (*registration, standards and codes, accreditation, complaints, and governance*), which structured the day's activities. The Framework was used to analyse *Tonga's Nurse, Nurse Practitioner and Midwives Act (2021)* and talk through elements within the five areas that are currently legislated within the Act.

World-Café discussions

Four World-Café rounds took place, facilitated by the Taskforce members. Participants were grouped into 5 tables, where a 'world café' formula was used. Facilitators coordinated discussions against guided questions, to highlight challenges and topic areas, gathering common themes on butchers' paper.



Workshop participants engaging in World Café activities.

Groups were able to have in depth conversations about five elements of the regulation framework introduced in the morning. Each tables paper was then fixed on the wall; participants were able to reflect on other groups thoughts on the areas covered. Key points and recommendations from each group were fed back by the Taskforce facilitators and others for open comments by the larger group. This feedback then fed into the workshop recommendations presented on final day (pg.3).

Activity 3: Group Discussion on National Priorities

Tonga’s priority area for this workshop focused on developing accreditation standards for Tonga’s nursing education program, aiming to strengthen the quality of nursing education. Tonga Nursing Council Registrar, Mrs Sulieti Topui presented on the roles of the Nursing Council. Participants had fruitful discussions following reflecting on World Café discussions, led by the Taskforce facilitators.



Workshop participants discussing accreditation standards

Prof. White followed this by introducing the work led by the PLP 2024 Tongan Fellows, including CNO Mele Filise, and later reviewed regionally, on nursing education accreditation standards. The proposed seven evidence-based accreditation standards were presented. The draft standards included governance, curriculum development and evaluation, resources, assessment, clinical placements, and Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI), based on international examples.

Participants were split into seven groups with Taskforce facilitators. Each group reviewed one of the proposed standards in detail, identified potential adaptations to ensure alignment with

Tonga’s context and needs. The groups then merged, so one ‘expert’ per standard was on a single table, allowing deep discussions on the details of each proposed accreditation standard.



Workshop participants discussing accreditation standards

Each group reported back on recommended changes to the standards, and they were deliberated by the wider group. Overall, draft standards were approved by stakeholders during the workshop with minimal but important changes. Standards will need to go to Nursing Board for approval.

Activity 4: Review and Key Outcomes

All workshop outcomes were successfully met through workshop activities. Gaps were reviewed by the 5 regulation framework areas and following consultation and review of the workshop recommendations with all workshop participants.



Chief Nursing Officer, Sr Mele Sii Inukihaangana Filise

CNO Mele Inu Filise was unable to attend the workshop due unforeseen circumstances, however she was able to review and amend the outputs of the workshop with Prof. Rumsey. The following challenges and recommendations for action were agreed upon.