

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

Brief 10: Palau Nursing Regulation Workshop – 22nd and 23rd April 2026
Palau Royal Resort, Koror, Palau

Background

The Palau Ministry of Health and Human Services (MHHS) Taskforce and Pacific Leadership Program (PLP) Fellows hosted the Palau Country Workshop from 22 to 23 April 2026, with 29 participants (24 female, 5 male) joining from the MHHS, Board for Health Professional Palau, Palau Nurses Association (PNA), Palau Community College (PCC), and other key partners; including senior nurses and midwives from the Belau National Hospital and community health centres.

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 Healthy Region (PHR) initiative (2024-2028). The WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing, Midwifery & Health Development at University of Technology Sydney (WHO CCNMH UTS) manages and implements 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.

Purpose and Approach

Throughout 2025 and 2026, WHO CCNMH UTS and Fellows from the 2024 and 2025 PLP are facilitating workshops in all 13 countries involved in SHWP. These workshops, led by the PLP Fellows, engage national stakeholders in identifying system-level strengths and challenges across education, regulation, service delivery, and governance to establish a common understanding, co-develop and prioritise actions for strengthening nursing and midwifery registration, regulation, and workforce planning through multi-stakeholder collaboration and regional alignment. The Fellows are supported by the WHO CCNMH UTS team, including Prof. Michele Rumsey, Ms Karen Cook and Ms Amanda Neill undertaking this in-country visit.



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 work priorities.
4. To agree on priorities and a plan of action.
5. To review accreditation in line with registration.
6. To collect baseline data for monitoring and evaluation, GEDSI and raising awareness of GEDSI principles.
7. To review legislation for the regulation of nursing and midwifery.



PLP Fellows from Palau – Carolynn Ngiraswei, Louisa Benaya, Cheryl Lee Ongalibang and Adeline Franz.

Activity 1: Strategic Orientation and Leadership Engagement

WHO CCNMH UTS Team first met with the new Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer (CNMO) Lorraine Beketaut, the Quality Assurance Improvement Officer and previous CNMO Antonnette Merur, and the Palau Fellow facilitators, Louisa Benaya and Adeline Franz (PLP 2024) and Cheryl Lee Ongalibang and Carolynn Ngiraswei (PLP 2025) to discuss and plan meeting objectives and structure of activities. The WHO

CCNMH UTS team also met with the Australian Ambassador to Palau, Mr Toby Sharpe, Senior Program Manager Ms. Clarissa Adelbai, and Development and Administration Officer Mr Axl Rdiall at the Australian Embassy prior to the workshop.



From left: Ms Karen Cook and Ms Amanda Neill (WHO CCNMH UTS), Ms Lorraine Beketaut (Palau MHHS), Prof. Michele Rumsey (WHO CCNMH UTS), Ms Clarette Matlab (Palau MHHS).

Meetings were also held with the Palau Director of Hospital Services, Ms. Clarette Matlab, prior to the workshop to discuss the SHWP Program and workshop objectives; and after the workshop to brief her and discuss workshop outcomes, recommendations and next steps.

The SHWP Workshop was opened by the Palau Vice President and Health Minister Mr Raynold Oilouch, who highlighted the importance of strengthening nursing and midwifery in Palau and thanked the Australian Government for its continuing support. The Australian Ambassador, Mr Toby Sharpe followed with opening remarks.

The new CNMO Ms Lorraine Beketaut began the meeting sessions by presenting SHWP's background and an overview of the nursing and midwifery context in Palau along with the Traffic Light Action Plan. These Traffic Lights were developed from the State of the World's (SOWN) Nursing Report 2025 and amended throughout the workshop to reflect current position and priority actions.

An evening event was held for workshop participants and special guests at the conclusion of the first day.



Presentation by Palau CNMO Ms Lorraine Beketaut at the workshop.

Activity 2: Review of Regulation

Ms Karen Cook (WHO CCNMH UTS) presented the framework for Health Professional Regulation - the five areas of regulation (registration, standards and codes, accreditation, complaints, and governance), with an analysis of the current legislation which structured the day's activities.

Following the regulation framework sessions, a World-Café style group activity was facilitated by PLP Fellows and the CNMO. Participants were divided into five groups around tables, each allocated one of the five areas of regulation. Facilitators ran through gaps, challenges and topic areas, gathering common themes. Groups then had in depth conversations about elements of the regulation framework introduced in the morning.

Notes from each table were then written on paper and fixed to the wall for participants to review other groups' ideas and comments.

Key points and recommendations for each regulation area were then fed back to the larger group by the PLP facilitators for comments and discussion. Participants had fruitful debates about the priority issues for each area, which fed into the overall workshop recommendations presented.

Activity 3: Group Discussion on National Priorities

Palau's priority area for this workshop focused on regulation, leadership and accreditation for nurses and midwives. Dr Dever from the Palau Board of Health Professions and Quality Assurance Improvement Officer and former CNMO Antonette Merur presented on the current challenges for nursing and midwifery registration, and nursing leadership in the country.



Small group work for the World Café activity.



Dr Dever outlined some of the main issues associated with human resources, including recruitment and upskilling of nurses in Palau. He also explained difficulties for Palau dealing with US and Pacific institutions and systems, highlighting the need to support nursing program in Palau through the Palau Community College (PCC) and its nursing school.

Ms Merur's presentation covered a brief history of nursing in Palau, and an overview of the current status of nursing (102 nurses in total) and health

facilities and services. She also outlined the challenges currently facing the nursing profession in Palau and the implications for the health workforce and health care provision.

The outcomes and suggested actions for this session were included in the summarised gaps and recommendations that followed, once approved by the larger group and senior MHHS staff.

Ms Vanessa Ebil Espangel, Acting Nurse Manager Public Health, then presented the purpose of accreditation, the role of the Board of Health Professions and accreditation standards criteria to set the scene for further discussion and the final workshop activity.

Fellows explained the process for the related activity to the larger group, dividing them up around four tables. The Fellows were allocated one table each to facilitate discussion and review accreditation standards. Once the seven standards had been reviewed by each of the groups, comments and suggested amendments were fed back to the larger cohort for open discussion. Debates followed about what needed to be changed to fit Palau's current accreditation requirements and how accreditation should be utilised going forward. These detailed comments were incorporated into the summary of gaps/discussion and recommendations arising from the workshop.

