



## Royal Melbourne Graduate Nurses Association

RMHGNA  
PO Box 2182  
Royal Melbourne  
Hospital  
VIC. 3050.



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## 2024-25 Committee nominees

The following are profiles for the nominees for the 2024-25 RMGNA Committee. The Committee resolved to have a maximum of 12 members.

*Please note:* in accordance with the RMGNA Model Rules, only Full or Associate members (where more than 10 business days have passed since they became an Association member) are entitled to vote.

Any further questions or comments, please email [rmhgna@outlook.com](mailto:rmhgna@outlook.com)

### Janet Briggs

Janet completed her General Nursing training at the Royal Melbourne Hospital (RMH) in February 1979. Following a 'Staffing Year' and overseas travel she commenced her Midwifery training at the Royal Women's Hospital (RWH) in March 1981. In September 1984 she was appointed Midwife in Charge of one of the Antenatal/Postnatal wards.

During her time at the RWH she established the CTG Unit, started a pilot program for Day Assessment of Antenatal Women-forerunner of the Pregnancy Daycare unit, for which she was involved in the design and planning phase.

In 1991, she was awarded a RWH Travelling Scholarship to the UK where she visited several Antenatal Day Assessment Units in England, Scotland and Wales.

Since 1996 she has worked as a Clinical Research Nurse in the speciality of Vaccine Trials at the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH), Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) the University of Melbourne and currently the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity.

Her tertiary qualifications include a Bachelor of Applied Science in Advanced Nursing, a Diploma of Applied Science in Community Health and a Certificate for Accreditation as a Nurse Immuniser.



## Zoe Fox

Zoe is a 2024 graduate nurse at the RMH and is currently on annual leave, so she is unable to provide a profile. We are excited about having a current graduate nurse committee member who can represent the needs and views of new RMH nurses.

## Julie Halton

*GCertNurs (Emerg), GDipAdvClinPrac, MHLthServMt, MCLinEduc*

Julie is a Registered Nurse with over 40 years of clinical practice, management and clinical education experience. Although she calls herself an emergency nurse, with 27 years of experience in this specialty, her career pathway has been quite varied.

After completing hospital-based training, Julie started in the RMH emergency department and worked her way up to acting Nurse Unit Manager before discovering a passion for teaching. As a nurse educator she has supported learners in emergency, acute and subacute medicine, acute respiratory medicine, general surgical, gastroenterology and hepatology services as well as program support for graduate enrolled and registered nurses and as a casual academic educator and lecturer for a number of universities. Her other positions have included Access Management, Quality team member as the Deteriorating Patient Standard lead and project lead for a number of research projects including early work on Trauma Response Teams.

Julie holds qualifications in emergency nursing, advanced clinical practice and masters in both health services management and clinical education. She is a member of the Australian College of Nursing, the College of Emergency Nurses Australasia and the Australian and New Zealand Association for Health Professional Educators. She is also an active member of the Royal Melbourne Graduate Nurses Association, currently in the secretary role, and was a recipient of the RMGNA Jane Bell Scholarship in 2017 to continue with her Master's degree.

Her passion has always been to ensure high quality nursing practice which has included assisting with the preparation of new nurse educators through a hospital-based Masterclass Program, educational lead for a hospital-wide evaluation of the patient assessment practices of all nurses and the development of training, support and ongoing professional development activities for nursing preceptors.

Halton, J. A. (2014). Challenges in health policy: the next 10 years. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 200(1), 17–17. <https://doi.org/10.5694/mja13.11059>

Halton, J. A. (2020). Case Study: Transition Programs following a graduate nurse program (unpublished).

Halton, J.A. (2024). The transition of clinical nurses to nurse educator roles – a scoping review. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 78(3), 104022.

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## Helene Johns

I commenced my PTS at the RMH in October 1974 and spent four wonderful, busy years working and learning until the end of my staffing year in 1978 when I set off with Sue Debenham (from my PTS group) to do midwifery in Scotland. Despite being busy working and studying, we had many interesting excursions on holiday breaks within Scotland, down into England (meeting friends to attend the Cambridge Folk Festival), westward to Ireland and northwest to see the Glaciers and Fjords of Iceland. We also enjoyed visits from Australian friends and family

. After travelling for a time in Scandinavia, I eventually returned home to work at the Wimmera Base Hospital in Horsham and subsequently returned to Melbourne to be a midwife at the Royal Women's Hospital (The Women's). I returned to RMH in 1981 to work on nurse bank for a year while completing a Community Health Diploma at PIT (now RMIT). Once qualified, I worked in maternal and child health (MCH) in the Shire of Hastings and have dipped in and out of this field in various municipalities over the years since. Exposure to midwifery in Malawi for a few months in 1983 enticed me back to midwifery nursing and I returned to the Women's in 1984; I have continued at The Women's in various roles since, interspersed with further study and MCH work.

In 1986 I completed a Community Health degree at Lincoln Institute. Moving from the labour wards to join the Family Birth Centre (FBC) at The Women's, I was privileged to support women through pregnancy and birth in a midwife-led model of care. Studying part time, I completed the requisite coursework and a minor thesis evaluating the FBC childbirth education program to be awarded a Master of Education at Melbourne University in 1991. Following maternity leave for the birth of my first child, I somehow managed new motherhood, working and studying to sit the International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) exam so I could take on occasional MCH work and became an Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) volunteer counsellor between periods of maternity leave.

I continued to work at The Women's in various roles including responding to face-to-face, phone and email queries in the Women's Health Information Centre, cervical screening in the Well Women's clinic and other nurse-led consultations in the African Women's Clinic. Every day I felt privileged to be able to provide education, support, advocacy and where necessary, de-infibulation for women who have experienced circumcision/traditional cutting.

While managing breast pump hire for the local Australian Breastfeeding Association group. I noticed some mothers exclusively feeding their babies on expressed breastmilk for extended periods rather than feeding directly from the breast. A chance conversation with a former midwife colleague and now academic led to my involvement in a research project and work to complete a PhD exploring the phenomenon of expressing breast milk amongst mothers of healthy term infants called the Mothers and Infants Lactation Cohort (MILC) study.

I now work for the Victorian Maternal and Child Health Line and in the breastfeeding service at The Women's Hospital.

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### Christine Murray

Christine Murray is a registered nurse and midwife. She initially completed nurse training at the Royal Melbourne Hospital in 1974, followed by midwifery training at the Royal Women's Hospital in 1978. Chris has worked in several Australian states and eventually found her happy place in the Urogynaecology Unit at Mercy Hospital for Women, where she has worked for around 30 years.

Chris is married and has a family, with two adult sons. Chris has studied throughout her career, completing an Undergraduate Nursing degree at Deakin, a Masters degree at Monash and more recently a Professional Doctorate at La Trobe University, where she now works as a Lecturer.

### Robyn Reeder

I started my training at the RMH in April 1970 where we 'lived in' at the Connibere Nurses Home....what a time that was and so many stories to tell!! I loved our training days and 'Staffing Year' – they gave me a good foundation for further training as a midwife at Western General Hospital.

After spending 12 months travelling in London and Europe, including working in the London Clinic in 1976, I returned to Australia and completed my training in OH&S. I found work as an OH&S Clinician at a large industrial site in Sydney where I quickly needed to adapt my skills; it gave me a whole new perspective on risk management and prevention of injury for workers.

In 1980, busy with a young family and working as a primary care nurse and OHS Coordinator, I realised I needed a career change. Nursing aged and frail patients had always been special to me, so I started my career in aged care in 1988 as an RN in a local nursing home and shortly afterwards accepted the NUM role.

In 1990, I completed qualifications in Gerontology, Nursing Home Management, and Human Resource Management and moved into leadership roles progressing from DON to Executive DON then Director of Care Services across a number of residential and community aged care services.

I was then given the exciting opportunity of commissioning a greenfield site in NSW to provide services for independent living units, community and residential clients. This gave me the opportunity to discuss the complexities of providing aged care services with community and political leaders involved in the project as well as through co-authoring a book titled "Cultural Diversity and Spirituality in Ageing".

My passion for, and skills in, quality healthcare enabled me to lead teams and providers through successful accreditation and quality audit processes in both residential and community services as well as successfully becoming an Accreditation External Assessor registered on both the NSW and Victorian Assessor Registries.

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I moved back to Victoria in 2010 where I became the Integrated Services Manager for a large, aged care service, managing residential and community services in Melbourne as well as commissioning another new Aged Care and Community Service site. One of the highlights of this time was publishing the book 'From Seed to Table' filled with recipes from staff, clients and residents and presented on site by Maggie Beer...this was a really exciting event!

During COVID lockdowns, I completed my Certificate 4 in Training and Assessment which opened up numerous opportunities for me including establishing my own business, where my wealth of operational and practical knowledge, experience and qualifications allows me to provide services in quality and accreditation, leadership mentoring and support and professional development training and facilitation.

It's amazing to think that the original principles of training and skills from the RMH can still be applied despite the diverse legislative changes and technological pathways that have developed over the years.

### Lara Taylor

I started my General Nursing training at RMH in Group 386, on the 22nd of September 1986...and I've never left!

Following my training, I concentrated on Emergency Nursing, completing my Critical Care Certificate in Emergency Nursing in 1991 and then my Post Grad Dip a year later. I moved up to Anaesthetics and Recovery in the mid 1990's, becoming a Clinical Nurse Specialist and an Associate Charge Nurse, and worked full time until I had my first child in 1999. I returned after my maternity leave and started working part time in both Anaesthetics and Recovery and the Emergency Department. I am still a CNS in the Anaesthetics and Recovery and still find great satisfaction in the work we do and the care we give our patients.

It was during my time in Anaesthetics and Recovery where I met Jackie Dalzell and learned about the RMH Graduate Nurses' Association. Jackie was the Association's secretary but was retiring so looking for a successor. I was fascinated by the Association and its aims so came aboard as the secretary in the late 1990s. I spent many years as secretary then was lucky enough to become the RMGNA President in 2018.

I have a great passion for our hospital and the history we have. I care deeply about maintaining our rich past and looking into how we can help support our nurses now and in the future.

I would like to continue as part of the RMGNA's Committee. We are making strong progress within the hospital, establishing links, slowly increasing our profile and hoping to attract new members from within the RMH, all of which have been a challenge for us over the last few years.

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## Kylie Thitchener

Currently, I am the Director of Quality and Patient Safety at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and have been in this position for the last five years. Along with this, I am a Board Director of East Wimmera Health Service, Deputy Chair and Chair of the Quality and Risk Committee, a Director of the Australian Quadriplegia Association (AQA) and am the Convenor of the AQA Risk and Quality Committee.

I trained at RMIT and completed my Graduate Nurse Program and Graduate Certificate in Emergency Nursing at the Royal North Shore Hospital in Sydney. After this I took on an ANUM role at RCH Emergency Department and then worked in the USA in an ED for three years. Following this, I worked part time while raising my children and studying for a Master's degree in Health Services Management from Monash University (successfully completed!).

In 2006 I joined RMH in the Emergency Department as an educator and then went on to coordinate the hospital's Graduate Nurse program for 12 months. After this I worked in a number of other roles (all under Denise's leadership) at the RMH including Emergency Management and Planning Project Manager and then moving into the quality team with my last role in 2018 as the RMH Interim Director, Clinical Governance and Community Engagement.

The Royal Melbourne Hospital has always been a terrific place to work, and I have had many wonderful experiences working with many wonderful people.

Recently I stepped up to clinically to support the COVID effort. Initially, I administered flu shots in the early part of 2020 to many of the Peter Mac Staff and then working in the Hotels for Hero's for six months looking after many of the unwell health care workers of Victoria who could not isolate safely at home. During all of this time I was a part-time Nursing Officer in the Australian Army and a highlight for me was working on Galiwin'ku Island (500km North East of Darwin) with the local Health Care team and caring for the locals.

My two children are all grown up now and I am trying to transition into life without school kids and managing little adults instead! I now have the time to focus on supporting the Royal Melbourne Graduate Nurses' Association and getting to live shows, gardening and skiing; however, the kids like to tag along for some of these so I'm not completely alone yet!



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## Elizabeth Virtue

Liz has spent most of her professional career working at RMH after starting her nursing journey in group 382. After a couple of years working on 4 West, Liz moved to the Emergency Department where she remained for a very long time progressing from Clinical Nurse Specialist to Associate Nurse Unit Manager and finally 15 years as the Manager, Emergency Services. During that time Liz was the recipient of several scholarships, including the Lynly Aitken Travelling Scholarship in 2001 that was used to investigate occupational violence in emergency departments across the United Kingdom and the United States of America and in 2012 she received the Lynly and Yvonne Aitken Trust Scholarship that funded a research study investigating the effectiveness of electronic patient management plans for frequent attenders.

During her time in ED, Liz was asked to participate in several State Government and Department of Health committees including the Emergency Access Reference Committee and the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Trauma & Emergency Services. She also had several research interests including improving patient discharge, implementation of electronic patient management plans for frequent attenders, pain management at triage and occupational violence. She co-authored a number of papers and regularly presented at conferences. Her contribution to emergency nursing was recognised in 2012 when she was the recipient of the Australasian Emergency Nurse of the Year.

Other positions Liz has held at RMH include Nightlife Project Manager, Outpatients Transformation Project Officer, Acting Director of Nursing and Operations Surgery and Perioperative, Emergency Access Manager and Improvement Manager.

Since 2016 Liz has been the Support Services Manager at RMH looking after a team of 200 clinical assistants (CAs) who work across the wards and departments of RMH City Campus supporting clinical teams. During the pandemic she was asked to lead an additional team of COVID Support Officers who were employed to support patients and clinicians in wearing the correct personal protective equipment.

Currently Liz is involved in a range of activities, including peer support and family violence officer, and actively participates in the ongoing work of the Safety Culture team, Communicating for Safety and the Gender Equity committee. Liz is known for her leadership and is often heard to say, "just be kind and respectful".