

1 June 2026 | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Child Health Champion Honoured: Leading Paediatrician Receives King's Birthday ONZM

From: Te Kāhui Mātai Arotamariki o Aotearoa | Paediatric Society of New Zealand (PSNZ)

---

PSNZ warmly congratulates **Associate Professor Nicola Austin** on her appointment as an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) in the 2026 King's Birthday Honours, in recognition of her outstanding service to children's health.

Nicola is a leading paediatrician and clinical neonatologist who has fundamentally shaped neonatal and child-health services across Aotearoa. She serves as Chair of PSNZ's Child & Youth Health National Clinical Network (CYHNCN), where she guides national standards of care for tamariki and rangatahi.

Dr Sonja Crone, President PSNZ, says, "Nicola has been a cornerstone of paediatric care in Aotearoa, and this honour is a fitting tribute to her decades of service. As a neonatologist and a highly respected clinical leader, Nicola has set a standard of excellence that inspires our entire profession. Yet, it is her tireless advocacy for the health and wellbeing of all mokopuna that truly defines her impact. Her leadership has not only shaped the direction of our Society but has meaningfully improved the lives of countless children and whānau across the country. We celebrate this well-deserved honour alongside her, inspired by the profound difference her leadership has, and continues to make."

Nicola has held a series of pivotal clinical leadership roles, including Clinical Director of the Neonatal Unit at Christchurch Hospital, which she led through its relocation to Christchurch Women's Hospital in 2005, and Clinical Director of Christchurch Women's Hospital for 20 years. She served as Canterbury District Health Board's Chief of Child Health from 2007 to 2013.

She has held a range of positions with PSNZ, starting as a Council representative and serving as President of PSNZ from 2019 to 2021. During that time, a renewed strategy based on equity and Te Tiriti was introduced.

A committed academic, Nicola has been Clinical Associate Professor in Paediatrics at the University of Otago Christchurch School of Medicine since 2011, where she has published nearly 100 peer-reviewed articles and co-supervised doctoral candidates. She was the lead investigator of a landmark longitudinal study tracking the development of preterm infants from birth to 17 years of age.

"Tamariki in Aotearoa flourish in health and wellness"

---

Nicola expresses that she is honoured to be awarded the ONZM. “There are many to acknowledge who have contributed to my achievements, starting with my family, my colleagues in the Christchurch Neonatal Unit and maternity team, and the wider Waitaha and Aotearoa Child and Youth Health community. By working together, we bring improvements to the health of pēpi, tamariki and rangatahi in Aotearoa. My mahi centres on the clinical care of newborns and the privilege of sharing in their progress alongside their whānau.”

PSNZ works in close partnership with the CYHNCN, a network that brings together health professionals and consumers with expertise in child and youth health to improve outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi across Aotearoa. Nicola’s leadership has been central to that mission, and we extend our warmest congratulations to her on this richly deserved honour.

ENDS

**Ngā mihi,**

**Dr Sonja Crone**, President PSNZ | Consultant Paediatrician

**Executive Team**, Te Kāhui Mātai Arotamariki o Aotearoa | The Paediatric Society of New Zealand

**Media contact:** Ruth Dryfhout, Communications Manager | Paediatric Society of New Zealand

**Email:** [communications@paediatrics.org.nz](mailto:communications@paediatrics.org.nz)

**Notes for editors:**

The Paediatric Society of New Zealand is the professional body for paediatricians and child health specialists across Aotearoa. Our mission is to advocate for the health and wellbeing of all children and young people, and to support excellence in paediatric practice.

“Tamariki in Aotearoa flourish in health and wellness”