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Subject: [REDACTED]
Public submission supporting the Hospital and Health Boards (Safe Nurse-to-Patient and Midwife-to-Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2015

Date: Saturday, 19 December 2015 10:00:51 AM

Research Director
Health and Ambulance Services Committee
Parliament House
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Research Director,

Please accept my submission supporting the Hospital and Health Boards (Safe Nurse-to-Patient and Midwife-to-Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2015.

This bill will:

- Increase the amount of quality nursing time given to each patient, thereby preventing/reducing the number of patient medical complications.
- Reduce the likelihood of medication errors (wrong drug, wrong dose, wrong patient, wrong administration time, wrong route of administration etc) , which are a significant cause of medical complications, extended hospital stays and patient deaths.
- Reduce patient misadventures, for example, falls (which may cause injuries, extending a patient's hospital stay) due to a patient with dementia falling while their nurse is attending to other patients.
- Ultimately this bill will save lives and is in the best interests of all health consumers.

As a Registered Nurse of over 30 years, I know all health professionals try to deliver world's best practice to our patients. However, this is not always possible, and sub-optimal care can be delivered when nurses are stretched beyond a safe capacity by, for example, having up to eight patients on a day or evening shift (all with complex and rapidly changing medical needs). In a matter of 30 minutes, a patient's condition can deteriorate from stable to life-threatening, and an adequate nursing workforce must be present to respond to this, to administer treatments and call emergency medical assistance the minute they observe this deterioration.

While introducing this bill to Parliament, Health Minister Cameron Dick stated what myself and other health professionals already know - that mandating nurse/patient and midwife/patient ratios will save lives. The Minister spoke of a

research paper published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, which found that for each additional patient beyond four assigned to a registered nurse the risk of death increases by seven per cent for all patients.

However, the bill does not apply to private healthcare facilities. This is a major oversight as patients can (and likely do already) die from poor nurse/patient ratios in Queensland private health facilities. To be world's best practice, this legislation must apply to all health facilities. Private health facilities are big business and many thousands of Queenslanders are treated in the private system - these patients must be afforded the same level of safety as the public system.

I note while introducing this bill, Health Minister Cameron Dick, stated:

"I also want to assure those nurses here today that this is not the end of our commitment to safe nurse-to-patient and midwife-to-patient ratios. This is just the first step. We will be working with nurses and their representatives to look at those areas not covered by the regulation to consider the appropriate ratios for those areas."

I join other health professionals in welcoming this announcement.

I urge all sides of government to pass this bill, plus take the further required action of passing future legislation that will provide mandatory nurse/patient and midwife/patient ratios to all non-public health facilities as soon as possible.

Sincerely

Phil Browne
Registered Nurse