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As a community nurse who has practiced outside the hospital system for many years why am I so keen to speak publicly about nurse patient ratios? It's because of what I remember. Vulnerable patients and stoic nursing colleagues besieged with responsibilities day and night, for too many people with complex health needs. During one decade I worked as a Student and Registered Nurse employed by public and private facilities in Brisbane, Thursday Island, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Mackay and Cairns.

My memories of working on the wards encompass a succession of hectic hospital schedules in which I am inundated with therapeutic tasks. Insufficient time clearly related to the number of individuals in my care on any one shift, necessitated incessant prioritising of equally essential patient needs. Inevitably, even compassion had to be budgeted when the capacity to give one's total attention to a frail patient was curtailed by the pressing issues of another. Too many medical and/ or surgical patients determined interruptions, promoting relentless hurrying of nursing care. These conditions compel many nurses to curb careers in hospitals, commence post graduate studies and pursue a vocation elsewhere.

Every year since 1985 I have worked in full or part-time nursing roles including aged care and education with diverse organisations in Queensland. It is evident that each sector in health care struggles with unmanageable workloads. The introduction of ratios to eventually include all areas will have far reaching benefits for those receiving and giving nursing attention.

It is apparent on admission to a health care facility or when visiting loved ones that difficulties occur because of the competing concerns upon which nurses need to focus. Understandably nurses are called upon to address the barrage of emotional and physical distress suffered by patients and their families. Ratios give precedence to nursing care and enactment of laws this decade will protect future patients from despair due to adverse health consequences. The time required for nursing treatment is dignified with legal obligations guaranteeing appropriately staffed health care facilities.

New laws are foundations for transformation. Introducing innovative regulations Queensland is joining California, Victoria and Wales. Just as societies advanced in many nations throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century by granting legal recognition to women and indigenous people, our health care culture will improve with this legal milestone.

A turning point in our traditions, *The Hospital and Health Boards (Safe Nurse-to-Patient and Midwife-to-Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2015* will underpin an world class health care system for everyone. It is immensely satisfying to be present at this public hearing. Legislation for ratios empowers patients and nurses, authorising quality, safe care: the hallmarks of measured practice.