




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Public Hospitals, Nurse-to-Patient Ratios

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (10.05 am): Today is a significant day in the history of health care in Queensland. This afternoon I will introduce a bill into the House that will deliver major benefits for patients at public hospitals across the state. The Hospital and Health Boards (Safe Nurse-to-Patient and Midwife-to-Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2015 will implement the Palaszczuk government's election commitment to legislate for safe nurse-to-patient ratios and workload provisions to ensure patient safety and quality health care.

Today's legislation follows a proud tradition of health reform in the health sector by Labor governments. In 1923, under the government of Labor Premier EG Theodore, the Hospitals Act established hospital districts and boards with state and local governments guaranteeing board funding. In 1945, under the government of Labor premier Frank Cooper, the Hospital Benefits Act, which established free hospitals in Queensland—that is right; a Labor government established free hospitals in Queensland—was passed. This legislation came into effect on 1 July 1946 when Ned Hanlon, another reforming Labor figure, was premier. In 2015, under the leadership of Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, another Labor government will introduce legislation that will significantly improve our state's health system.

A nurse-to-patient or midwife-to-patient ratio is the minimum number of nurses or midwives working on a particular ward, unit or department in relation to the number of patients for whom they care. The Palaszczuk government will implement minimum ratios of one nurse to four patients for morning and afternoon shifts, and one nurse to seven patients for night shifts in a range of medical, surgical and acute mental health wards in public sector health service facilities across Queensland. These ratios will be implemented in a phased manner at prescribed locations across Queensland from 1 July 2016.

Research overwhelmingly shows that a higher number of registered nurses relative to the number of patients has a positive impact on patient outcomes, including decreased lengths of stays in hospitals and reduced inpatient mortality. This research has been published in a range of prestigious international medical journals over many years. By mandating ratios across specified Queensland public sector health facilities, our government recognises the important role that nurse-to-patient ratios play in supporting patient safety and quality of care. On behalf of the Palaszczuk Labor government, I look forward to introducing this legislation into parliament this afternoon and am confident that I have the overwhelming support of the nursing profession in so doing.