




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

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HOSPITAL AND HEALTH BOARDS (SAFE NURSE-TO-PATIENT AND MIDWIFE-TO-PATIENT RATIOS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (5.56 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Hospital and Health Boards (Safe Nurse-to-Patient and Midwife-to-Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2015. At the last election, the Palaszczuk Labor government made a commitment to the people of Queensland that we would legislate for safe ratios and workload provisions to ensure better patient safety and better quality health care for Queenslanders. All of the research indicates that a higher ratio of nurses or midwives to patients can lower mortality. Through minimum ratios, patients will benefit from improved quality of care and improved patient safety. The statistics highlight the benefits of nurse-to-patient ratios, such as reduced readmission rates, reduced post-operative mortality rates and greater patient satisfaction. Research shows us that ratios benefit the workforce, too, with better recruitment and retention rates, better staff satisfaction and better workforce sustainability.

Over the years I have been a part of this debate in four different capacities: firstly, as the daughter of a nurse; secondly, as a representative of health workers; thirdly, as a patient; and, lastly, as I find myself here today as a legislator. There is little doubt in my mind that being a nurse or a midwife is one of the toughest jobs going. For me, proof of that is that you never come across a nurse who is not as tough as nails. One of the strongest nurses I know is my mum. She met the challenge of raising four kids and putting herself through university as a mature age student to achieve her dream of caring for others. I am certain that it was a challenge for her and a perpetual struggle, because, as one of those four kids, I recall giving her no end of grief. I have seen her career in nursing through her eyes: a career of joy and sorrow, challenge and opportunity, moments of triumph and tragedy, a career of giving. There was no shortage of shop talk around the family dinner table and we were desensitised pretty quickly to the content of the conversation. That was okay by me, because the shop talk around the table meant that Mum was there at the table. Anyone who has a nurse in their family would appreciate how precious that is.

The second capacity in which I have encountered this debate is around the negotiation tables with employers and nurses. For decades nurses and midwives have needed to negotiate for better standards in the workplace to deliver better care. Sitting around the negotiation table with employers in the private aged care space and workforce representatives makes you no stranger to these arguments. I am acutely aware that as far as midwives and nurses have come on this journey, it is not far enough. The people of Queensland deserve better. The nurses and midwives of Queensland deserve better. I have heard the arguments of those opposite around not being convinced that ratios are needed, that good faith, good will and good governance should get nurses and midwives far enough. Not for a single second do I agree.

Debate, on motion of Ms Boyd, adjourned.

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (7.42 pm), continuing: I have heard the arguments from those opposite about not being concerned that ratios are needed; that good faith, goodwill and good governance should get nurses and midwives far enough, and not for a single second do I agree. Over

the last decade I have sat for years in negotiations with private providers where nurses did not get good quality, safe working practices that they deserved because, as long as you do not have a commitment to legislated mandated ratios and workload provisions, good faith, goodwill and good governance frankly do not amount to much during a nurse's or midwife's shift.

Being a patient gives you another perspective. Being sick, incapacitated or confined to a hospital bed leaves you with an immense sense of vulnerability. This is only surpassed when you push a buzzer and what seems like an eternity passes by. These reforms are good not only for nurses but also for patients. Fewer demands on nurses and midwives will enable improved quality of care for Queenslanders which is what they deserve in their time of injury and illness.

Lastly, as a legislator I find myself in a privileged position to be not only an advocate for this change but also able to deliver on it for safer standards, for better workplaces for nurses and midwives and, in turn, better care for patients. I am in the privileged position to be able to finally legislate for nurse-to-patient ratios in acute wards in public hospitals. One of the defining moments crystallising my decision to run as a candidate for the Queensland Labor Party came about sitting in a hospital meeting room as the Newman government cuts drove down into the public health system. This is true Labor policy in its finest traditions. Our public health system is focused on patient safety. Quality care is driven by professional commitment and not funding targets. Queenslanders deserve nothing less. I commend the bill to the House.