




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

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (7.59 pm): I rise to proudly support the Hospital and Health Boards (Safe Nurse-to-Patient and Midwife-to-Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2015. This bill amends the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 and enables the government to legislate a nurse-to-patient ratio. The nurse-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 they care for.

What is a nurse? By definition, a nurse is a person who is trained to give care to people who are sick and injured. Nurses are our No. 1 most trusted profession. I am proud to say that the nurse is the most trusted profession. Politicians are rated 49th out of 50 on the list of trusted professions. However, I believe that after this legislation passes our credibility will have climbed.

I grew up with a mighty woman—a nurse—my mum. My mum has said that being a nurse is about finding the need within a community and trying to fix it. My mum started her career as a Red Cross nurse. In 1959 she moved to Brisbane hospital, now the Royal Brisbane & Women's Hospital, to do her training. She worked and studied hard. There were never enough staff to meet the needs of patients. My mother worked in wards of up to 50 patients with a ratio of up to eight patients to one nurse. She said supplies were thin and there was never enough staff to tend the needs of every patient.

I can recall growing up that my mum had one of those nurse's caps and then she got a stripe. We were so proud of our mum when she got the stripe. Then she got two and then three stripes. Then she received one of the sister's caps and got a red stripe on that. We were so proud of our mum. They asked her to be a matron, but my mum always wanted to just be the nurse; she did not want to be the boss, so she stayed as a nurse and she delivered hundreds of babies in her time.

Under this legislation nurses will have a more manageable, safer workload with ratios of four nurses to one patient during the day and seven patients to one nurse during the night. The bill will also see an additional 250 nurses employed across Queensland. My daughter was an enrolled nurse at the Charters Towers Eventide aged-care facility and then she moved on to the Townsville general hospital, where she has been working as an RN in surgical ward 3. All the nurses and management fight over her because she is so popular. I had to add that.

Nurses and midwives play a crucial role in delivering safe, high-quality care. In contributing to the debate tonight hopefully we can provide a safer environment for those in need and for nurses like my daughter. Establishing and maintaining a safe workload has been a long-term priority for nurses and midwives. There are currently no laws governing how many patients can be safely allocated to a single nurse. The absence of such laws can result in nurses and midwives having an unsafe workload and a reduction in patient safety. The Queensland Nurses' Union have been lobbying for a safer ratio for our nurses and midwives, and tonight I stand with them. I admire their dedication, their determination, their

passion and their will to see a better nurse-to-patient ratio. This is a really big win for them. I know what it is like to fight hard for years to get something. This is a good night for the Queensland Nurses' Union and a good night for all of us here.

An incident having occurred in the public gallery—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! Can I caution people in the public gallery that applause is not tolerated and you will remain silent.

Mr KNUTH: I would like to thank all the nurses and midwives for their hard work including my mum and my daughter. I wish them all a happy International Nurses Day.