




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

International Nurses Day; Nurse-to-Patient Ratios

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (2.22 pm): International Nurses Day 2016 is a day I will long remember. It was a historic day for this parliament. We were the first in Australia, and only the fourth jurisdiction in the world, to pass safe nurse-to-patient and safe midwife-to-patient ratios. Ratios save lives. We know this because of the research done by the Queensland University of Technology and the University of Pennsylvania. The research released in 2019 estimates that 145 lives have been saved; 255 readmissions were avoided, at a cost of \$1.2 million to \$2.2 million per admission; and 29,500 hospital days were avoided, with a total saving of between \$54 million and \$81 million.

I can proudly say that I am the only nurse in this parliament who voted in support of these laws. I supported better patient safety and better working conditions for nurses and midwives. I am sad to say that not everybody was in support of this. I wanted to have a quick review of what the current shadow minister for health, the member for Mudgeeraba, said in her second reading contribution. She started by saying—

I am disappointed that, in a hasty attempt to appease the Queensland Nurses' Union, this Labor government has chosen to introduce this piece of legislation with insufficient evidence to support the need for it.

There was plenty of evidence then, and there is plenty more evidence now. I will tell you what I am disappointed in. I am disappointed that an ex-nurse would not understand instinctively that by having fewer patients to care for a nurse could do a better job. The member also questioned if we would have enough nurses to implement the new ratios. I guess the member would wonder about that. I wonder how she would have covered those ratios having sacked thousands of nurses, because that is what they did. Finally, the member said—

... I do not believe that ratios are the panacea sold to nurses by the QNU.

The reality is that we have reversed the cuts, particularly to the graduate positions; we have introduced nurse navigators; we are building new hospitals; and we created the mental health levy. It was never sold as a panacea, but it is a very important measure, amongst a range of very important measures, that we as a government have implemented. We have always acted in close consultation with the QNMU. We certainly have not called regional nurses duds.

No matter what the member for Mudgeeraba or the Leader of the Opposition might say about backing nursing ratios, we know—after the fiasco in Cairns where they voted for the Path to Treaty and backflipped a few months later—that they cannot be trusted on anything. An LNP government that takes a 'cuts-afulli' approach will be a clear and present danger to safe nurse and midwife ratios. Only Labor backs safe nurse and midwife ratios, because we know that ratios save lives.