

Ratios put patient safety *first*



Ratios put patient safety *first* campaign petition background

The New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) is currently campaigning for an expanded and improved legally enforceable mandated nursing hours/equivalent ratios in the public health system. The key purpose of this campaign is to put patient safety first in all New South Wales hospitals, no matter where you live. Country hospitals and some specialties in the public health system are falling behind metro hospitals and are in dire need of improved nurse-to-patient ratios.

For example, at many country hospitals, the ratios on a general surgical ward is 5 patients to 1 nurse on the day and afternoon shifts, and 7 patients to 1 nurse on the night shift; whereas at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in the city, it is 4 patients to 1 nurse on the day and afternoon shift and 7 patients to 1 nurse on the night shift.

This means that each patient in country hospitals is getting one hour less hands on care from nurses than in city hospitals, even if they have the same illness.

Nursing hours delivered via ratios must also be expanded in some specialty units like community and community mental health nursing, paediatric,

neonatal intensive care units (NICU), emergency departments and other critical care units.

In areas like paediatric and NICU there is an urgent need to guarantee nurse numbers; the need for one to one care in neonatal intensive care units in particular is critical due to the care of extremely vulnerable patients. The introduction of ratios/nursing hours into high pressure areas like Emergency Departments and other critical care units would alleviate some of the stress for nurses and provide safer outcomes for patients.

Independent international research also shows that ratios/nursing hours system is an effective staffing model that works here and globally for safe patient care.

While the Government has delivered 1580 more nurses to the health system as a result of the NSWNMA's *Safe Patient Care* campaign in 2010, country hospitals are still struggling to keep their patients safe. As advocates for better health outcomes on behalf of their patients, nurses and midwives in New South Wales strongly believe that country patients deserve the same level of nursing care that patients in the city receive.

SUBMITTING THE PETITION

Please bear in mind that in order for the signatures collected to be admissible to the legislative assembly, certain rules must be followed:

- Each page of signatures must be headed with the words of the request.
- Every signature must be original hand-writing, and signatures must not be pasted on, photocopied or transferred in any other way.
- The petition must be signed by the people whose names are listed, using their own signature or mark if they are unable to write. Every person signing a petition must write their address after their signature.

Once the petition has been filled out, please return the original petitions to the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association: **Attn: Lisa Kremmer, Director of Operations, 50 O'Dea Ave, Waterloo, NSW 2017**

